





THE
INFIDEL'S TEXT-BOOK,
BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF
THIRTEEN LECTURES
ON
THE BIBLE.

BY ROBERT COOPER,
AUTHOR OF "THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ANALYZED," &c.

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"The greatest part of the Christian world can hardly give any reason why they believe the Bible to be the Word of God, but because *they have always believed it, and they were taught so from their infancy.*" — DR. ISAAC WATTS.

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PREFACE.

THE Author of the present publication has long been of opinion, that a small work, written in a plain and dispassionate style, arranged with order and perspicuity, and published at a cheap rate, containing a summary of the best arguments of the Infidel world against the divinity of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, was a *desideratum* in heterodox literature that ought to be supplied as speedily as possible. With the view of promoting so desirable a consummation, the following Lectures are respectfully submitted to the consideration of the inquiring public.

Many Infidel works have appeared, which are of so desultory a character, or devoted only to some particular portion of the question, that they have been, *of themselves*, as a *book of ready reference*, of little *general* use to the "unbeliever." If he was anxious to furnish a Christian opponent with a full refutation of the subject, he has had to purchase a variety of works, *one* of which only, in many instances, would be as expensive as the production now offered to him.

The "Infidel's Text-Book," it is hoped, will prove as useful a pocket companion to the sceptical community as its predecessor — "The Holy Scriptures Analyzed."

The following are the points discussed, which, it is conceived, embrace the whole argument:—

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The reader will please to observe, that a separate Lecture is devoted to each of the above subjects, in the order in which they are stated. This arrangement, it is presumed, will be a convenience, and contribute to the general usefulness of the work.

London, (Eng.) January, 1846.

THE
INFIDEL'S TEXT-BOOK.

LECTURE FIRST.

HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

FRIENDS—

THIS evening we purpose to enter upon an inquiry which demands the most serious attention of every unflinching and uncompromising friend to truth and enlightenment. To those who are solicitous that the mental existence of man should no longer be one of ignorance, imbecility, and delusion, but one ennobling scene of intelligence, reason, and free inquiry,—a scene in which his aspiration after the true and the good, would remain unchecked by the trammels of priestly arrogance, and vulgar intolerance,—an investigation like the present will appear one of peculiar interest.

We live in an age when it has become imperative upon every honest and independent man to declare, fearlessly and unreservedly, the genuine sentiments of his mind upon *every* question which involves the freedom and progression of humanity. Too long have the masses been held in leading-strings. Too long have they thought by *proxy*. It is now time to *think* for themselves, *examine* for themselves, *speak* for themselves. While they continue to admire the playthings of their mental babyhood, and refuse to exert the energy and independence which become their

maturity, error and imposture will continue to delude and enslave them. Priestcraft will still crush, in its brutal grasp, the best efforts of the bold and the true. I am of opinion, that so long as this great moral nuisance—*priestcraft*—is tolerated, all endeavors to secure the permanent independence of the millions will be frustrated.

This it is, that, in all ages, and all countries, but more especially in Christendom, has blasted the hopes and labors of the patriot, the philosopher, and the philanthropist! It is, therefore, we enter upon the subject before us, believing that if the faith of the people in the Divinity of this “tale of a tub” is once exploded, the grand corner-stone of the priestly system is shaken, and the whole fabric must speedily be razed to the ground. Once deprive the priest of his magic wand—the Bible—and his “occupation will be gone.”

In this, our first discourse, I purpose to commence a compendious history of the “Holy Bible,” from the remotest date on record, to the present period; and from that history to demonstrate the moral impossibility of such a production being a revelation from Deity.

We may rationally presume, at the outset, that any work emanating from a God, would have been immediately and generally known, and produced at once, such an impression as to occasion instant and universal conviction. “If *God* had spoken, the universe *must* have been convinced.” So far, however, from this being the fact, the early history of the Bible is shrouded in almost impenetrable darkness. It was entirely unknown to any of the human race, except a contemptibly small section, the Jews, until so late a date as the year 287 B. C. Neither Hesiod, Homer, Herodotus, nor any of the immortal minds of antiquity, make any allusion to it. The great Phœnician historian, SANCHONIATHO, though quoted by the Christian father, Eusebius, makes no reference to the Bible, *or even to the Jews as a nation*. The celebrated WYT-

TEMBACH, in his famous reply to Josephus, (Opuscula, vol. 2, p. 416,) shows that the Jews only came into notice in Greece after the time of Alexander the Great, and that the historical monuments *preceding* that period, *make not the slightest mention of any Jewish transaction.* In short, he triumphantly establishes the important fact, so anxiously withheld by the Christian priests,—*that the Jews were unknown to the world as a nation, until they were subjected by the Romans.*—Yet are we to believe that a book like the Bible, alleged to be “divinely inspired,” and so “*essential*” to the eternal welfare of humanity at large, remained so long in utter obscurity!

PROFESSOR COOPER, *of America*, observes, — “No authentic historian of ancient times, Josephus excepted, has ever mentioned the Jews as an independent nation or state, or as being in possession of Palestine, or any part of great Syria, before, or in the time of Alexander. As a nation, they appear to have been entirely unknown to Herodotus, and all other Greek historians. What had become of them when Xenophon wrote of the Eastern Nations? which was only 150 years after their alleged return from Babylon. He mentions the Syrians of Palestine as under the Persian government, *but not a word about the Jews.* Herodotus mentions the invasions of the Scythians, through Syria, even to the borders of Egypt; but acknowledges no Jews or Israelites. In the fragments which remain of Sanchoniatho, Ctesias, Borosus, and Manetho, they are not noticed, *even as a petty or subject state*; so that we have the fullest *negative* evidence, that in the times of these historians, no part of Syria was a Jewish country. Diodorus, in detailing the events in that country, the Siege of Tyre, &c., during Alexander’s conquests, says not a word of the Jews forming a state or colony, or of their boasted city of Jerusalem; and he is equally silent as to their existence as a nation, during the time of Alexander’s immediate successors; nor have we any account of

them, deserving of credit, until the time of Antiochus the 4th, under whom they lived, and he was subject to the *Romans*. If the territory of Judea was given to them by the King of Babylon only about 200 years before the Macedonian conqueror went to the east, *why did not he and his historians find them there?*—The plain and simple truth is, the Jews *never* formed an independent state; and that part of Syria called Palestine, was, in all known ages, subject either to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, or Romans, (according to the tide of conquest) as it now is to the *Turks*."

But who, were these Jews who *alone* enjoyed the *precious* privilege of the "Holy Word?" A great—a philanthropic—a noble people? No; but on the contrary, they were held in sovereign contempt by every nation who became acquainted with them.—APOLLONIUS, as quoted by Josephus himself, the historian of the Jews, in his work against *Apion*, said of them, "they (the Jews) were the most trifling of all the *barbarians*, and that they were the only people *who had never found out anything useful for life*."—Dr. Burnet, in his *Archæologiæ Philosophiæ*, admits that "they were of a gross and sluggish nature—of a dull and heavy disposition—bereft of humanity—a vile company of men—an assembly of slaves, brought out of Egyptian prisons, who understood no art but that of *making bricks*!" *Josephus* himself, even admits that his countrymen were so *illiterate* as never to have written anything, or to have held intercourse with their learned neighbors. Indeed, no people of antiquity were more ignorant, credulous, intolerant, and wretched, than the Jews. While the ancient Chaldeans, Arabians, Egyptians, Grecians, and Romans, produced their men of science and erudition, the Jews added nothing to the glorious pyramid of human knowledge. And yet we are to believe, even in the nineteenth century, that a being said to be "all-wise," and "all-good," selected such a race as his

“chosen people,”—the people who were *solely* and *specially* entrusted with his “divine word.” What a mockery !

I hasten, however, to show that *the Jews themselves*, even their own *priests*, were ignorant of the “divine law,” for many *centuries* subsequent to the time when it is *supposed* to have been written. The *first* time any reference is made to any work answering the Jewish Text-book, was in the year 628, B. C., when a priest named *Hilkiah*, is stated to have FOUND “a book of the law.” The story is told in the 34th c. of the 2nd book of Chronicles, vs. 14, 15, 18, 19, and 30.—“And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah, the priest, FOUND a book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said unto Shaphan, the Scribe, *I have found the book of the law*, in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. Then Shaphan, the Scribe, told the King, saying, Hilkiah, the priest, hath given me a book ; and Shaphan read it before the King. And it came to pass when the King had heard the words of the law, *that he rent his clothes*. And the King went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their ears *all* the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.” There are two circumstances connected with this story upon which I feel it necessary to remark.—The first is, that it appears exceedingly strange if the “book of the law” existed prior to that date (628), that the King, the scribes, the people, and, above all, the *priests*, should have displayed such gross ignorance of its contents, as to express the utmost astonishment upon its being read to them. It is evident if the Jews were acquainted with the “law of the Lord” before Hilkiah read it to them, they would not have manifested such surprise. *And if this was the first*

time the Jewish people heard the law, it is clear the whole of the direct external testimony in favor of the authenticity and genuineness of the *Old Testament*, (at least, so far as concerns the *Pentateuch*) rests SOLELY upon the IPSE DIXIT of the old priest Hilkiāh; and those who have read the Bible, must be familiar with the "honorable" character of the Jewish priesthood, and will, therefore, know what confidence to place in the testimony of such a man. They will naturally ask, what authority have we that Hilkiāh did not write this book himself? or if he really found it, that he did not make what alterations he pleased? From the cunning with which he acted on this occasion—his employing a scribe to make it known to the youthful King, makes it very probable he was really the author of the book he pretended to have found, and took this opportunity of imposing it upon the mind of the young King. At all events, it is manifest there was only *one* copy then in possession, of the *whole* Jewish nation, and they were indebted for this copy to a *priest* who offered no evidence of the truth of his statement, but his own word! Presuming, however, that the Israelites were familiar with the "book of the Lord" anterior to its being found by the priest Hilkiāh, is it not a matter of amazement such a precious book should have been lost at all, much less for so *many generations*?

There are some circumstances, however, which lead us to the opinion that the story of Hilkiāh finding the book, and its being read to the people, is a mere fiction. I will appeal to every person in the slightest degree acquainted with language, whether any man could read off, at once, a book written 800 *years before*? The phraseology would necessarily be so altered by time, as to render it comparatively unintelligible at the first glance. It is so with the Latin, French, English, and all other languages. Suppose any person of the present day was to produce a book of laws written in the time of King Ethelbert, of Eng-

land, and promulgated by his authority, would not the learned world require a full and particular account of the book, and the discovery of it, and undeniable evidence of its authenticity before they would believe it? Here is a book claiming to be the autograph of the great national lawgiver of the Jews—the only code of laws, religious and civil,—the only authority for the claims of the priests—a book that ought to have been periodically read to the people, by the clergy appointed so to do—that ought to have been familiar to their men of learning and rank—produced for the *first* time, after an interval of 800 years, by a man who gives no other account of it than—*I found it!* Why, just the same reason could be alleged in favor of the divinity of Joe Smith's Bible—the “Book of the Mormons.” *He* pretends to have *found it*.

PROFESSOR COOPER, in his admirable Letter on the Pentateuch, very judiciously observes, when referring to the account of Hilkiah finding this book—“Now, of this book, no account whatever is given but this—*Hilkiah has found a book*. We are not informed where it was hidden and found, on what materials it was written, in what dialect or character, in what kind of preservation it was, whether it was an autograph of the Jewish lawgiver, or some recent copy, what its contents were, and what time it took to read it; we are furnished with no information to authenticate it, nor is any inquiry made concerning it.—Shaphan reads it off as if it were written recently. All this is done under the very suspicious circumstances of the workmen being bribed by having no reckoning made with them as to what they had earned, but the money was delivered to them in a lump,—2 Chron. c. xxxiv. v. 17—without check or inquiry, or any questions asked. It appears, also, from Josiah's remarks, that neither the Jews of that day, nor their *forefathers*, knew anything about the law, or used any observance of it. It appears, from the whole account, Hilkiah had enlisted his pupil, the young

king, in support of the Jewish priests, against the priests of Baal; and as the Jews knew nothing of the law of Moses, something of the kind was necessary as a system of religious ceremonies. *He* composed a book of the law, and *pretended* to have found it in the temple, after bribing his workmen to silence and secrecy. No wonder, under these circumstances, that when the book was produced, no inquiry was made, and no question asked. The whole is a concerted plan, which the prophetess Hulda is brought over to authenticate. I say no impartial reader can put any other construction on this manifest contrivance, as described in the books of Kings and Chronicles.—This account amounts to full proof that the book of the law, whatever it was, rests upon the credit, not of Moses, but Hilkiah. It is Hilkiah's book of the law, according to the narration as it stands, for it is not attempted to trace it backwards to any one else."

But this is not the only time the "Holy Writings," as we are taught to call them, were missing. We are told by Jewish writers themselves, that they were *completely* lost during the Babylonish captivity (which was only a few years after they were said to be found by Hilkiah), and were not restored until the priest Ezra, was inspired to re-write them, some 400 years before the Christian era. So that we must believe this *invaluable* book was first lost for *eight* centuries, then read for a short time, and subsequently lost again, *never to be recovered*. How the "chosen people" prized their Godly treasure! The manner in which Ezra performed the onerous task of re-writing the Jewish Text-book, is detailed in 4th book of Esdras—a book deemed authentic by the Greek church. He dictated the Holy books during forty successive days and nights, to five scribes, who were *continually* writing. *Thus, then, do the authenticity and genuineness of the Old Testament, rest upon the authority of that one priest, who might dictate to the scribes what he pleased—omit or add, or alter just what he felt disposed.—*

That he would have every opportunity of indulging in these liberties, is proved by the fact, as stated by Brown, in his Dictionary of the Bible, Bishop Marsh in his "Lectures," and in the 8th c. of Nehemiah, *that the Jews lost their own language during the Babylonish captivity, and spoke the CHALDAIC tongue*, the priests being obliged to expound the Holy books to the people in that language, thereby affording them every facility to introduce what matter they thought fit, the multitude being quite incompetent to detect any interpolation, alteration, or omission. It is now admitted by most Christian writers of eminence, that the compilation made by Ezra, is the authority upon which we have to depend for our translations. Nay, the Christian father Ireneus, distinctly declared that the books of the Old Testament, were not in existence until "they were *fabricated* seventy years after the Babylonish captivity, by Esdras," (or Ezra.)

This is a fact of some moment, and one with which the people are generally unacquainted. Hence, the vulgar belief that the Bible is a work of extraordinary antiquity—that it was the *first*, and, therefore, according to the logic of the crowd, the *best* that was ever written. There were many composers who flourished before Ezra—the real author of the Old Testament.—He lived only 400 years B. C., while *Orpheus* flourished 900 B. C. *Hesiod and Homer*, 800, *Zoroaster and Behus*, 700, *Lycurgus, Numa, Thales, Pittacus, and Bias*, 600, *Pythagoras, Æsop, Solon*, and many of the earlier Grecian philosophers, 500 B. C. I shall not remark upon the ancient books of the Chaldeans, Arabians, Hindoos, and Chinese, as I shall have occasion to refer to them in a subsequent lecture, or it could be easily shown that the pretended sacred writings of these nations, are of much greater antiquity than our own. It is necessary I should here inform you, that there was no proper canon or collection of the writings of the Old Testament, until the time of the synagogue under the Maccabees, *which was only*

about 200 years before the appearance of Christ! Up to this period, the “Holy books” were *scattered* and liable to be altered or amended just as priests might determine! It is generally supposed by the “vulgar” that the Bible always retained its present form, but such an idea is manifestly erroneous.

It is a matter of considerable importance, at this stage of our inquiry, to ascertain the *character* of the men who drew up this canon or authorized collection of the Jewish writings. We must know whether they were *inspired* or not. If they were destitute of the “Holy Spirit” it is possible, according to the logic of the pious, they may have made mistakes, and very *serious* ones, too, and thereby mislead the Jewish and Christian world. What says *Le Clerc*, upon this vital point?—a first-rate *Christian* writer. In his *Disquisition upon Inspiration*, he remarks: “It may be said that the books in the Jewish canon, ought to be acknowledged as divinely inspired, rather than the Apocrypha that never were in it. I answer first, that no clear reason is brought to convince us that those who made the canon or catalogue of their books, were infallible, or had any inspiration whereby to distinguish inspired books from those which were not inspired.” Such are the opinions of a writer much admired by Christians—opinions which go to prove that we have only the testimony of *fallible* human beings, and those of the worst class—the *most fallible*—ignorant and cunning priests, in favor of the genuineness of our present canon of the Old Testament.

Presuming, however, that these men were inspired, I find, in reference to the same Synagogue, several very extraordinary circumstances which tend, in no slight degree, to invalidate the authenticity and genuineness of the Old Testament. We are told in the Talmud, that this memorable assembly of priests were about to reject the book of Proverbs, (one of the very few decent books that are to be found in the Old Testament,) the prophecies of Ezekiel and Ecclesias-

tes, because those writings were contradictory to the law of God, but a certain Rabbi, having undertaken to reconcile them, they were preserved as "canonical." Here, the three books, Proverbs, Ezekiel, and Ecclesiastes, are confessedly presented to us as altered by an impudent Jewish Rabbi! Notwithstanding, writings thus mutilated, to suit the purposes of priestcraft, are declared to be the *word of God!* Oh! orthodoxy, when wilt thou blush for thy blind and shameless credulity?

But this is not all. The Samaritan Jews, and the ancient Sadducees, rejected all but the Pentateuch.—There was also about this period, a prodigious number of *forged* books of Esdras, Daniel, and other prophets in circulation. And what authority have we that our present copies are not taken from the spurious? From these facts, it is obvious, *the Jews themselves* differed as to which of the present canon were genuine, and which were not. And this difference of opinion has existed down to our time, both amongst the most learned Jews and Christians. The Apocrypha, for instance, is pronounced genuine by the Catholics, but utterly rejected by the Protestants. The Canticles have been denounced as *forgeries* by the learned Dr. Whiston, and the books of Jonah and Daniel have been repudiated by Doctors Aitkin and Eichorn, as mere "legends and romances." *Ten* whole books are rejected by the Swedenborgians; and the celebrated Belsham, in his *Evidences*, p. 117, though supporting Christianity, positively declares that "of the law of Moses, that which is *genuine*, bears but a small proportion to that which is *spurious!*" And we are denounced as "dangerous men," because we will not believe that to be divine, upon which such contradictory opinions exist, amongst the very people who profess to acknowledge it!

I must now acquaint you with a very curious fact connected with this portion of our inquiry, as attested upon the authority of a distinguished Christian pro-

fessor. Granting for a moment that all the present books of the Scripture canon are genuine, I nevertheless hold that the Christian world are not in possession of the real "Word of God," inasmuch as many of the "sacred" books have been *absolutely* lost, and *never* transmitted to posterity. In confirmation of an opinion so bold, and, apparently, unwarrantable, I shall first quote from Du Pin. He was Professor of Philosophy, at Paris, and author of "a complete history of the canon, and writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments." From vol. 1, c. 1, sect. 8, and page 26, of that memorable work, I take the following passage:—"St. Eucharius says, it is evident why we have not remaining the books which the Holy Scriptures approve of, because Judea, having been ravaged by the Chaldeans, and the ancient bibliotheque being burnt, there remaining only a small number of the books which at present make up the Holy Scriptures, and which were collected and re-established by the care of Ezra." Here, then, we are informed that before the ravages of the Chaldeans, and the burning of the ancient bibliotheque, the "Word of God" consisted of a great number of books, but in consequence of that event, many of them were *destroyed*, and those we have remaining, are but a *small* portion of what once constituted the "Holy Book!"

But I find that the *Jews themselves* actually *BURNT* several of the holy books, and *lost* others. Simon, in his "Critical History of the Version of the New Testament," quotes St. Chrysostom as follows:—"The Jews having been at sometimes careless, and at others profane, they suffered some of the sacred books to be *lost* through their carelessness, and have burnt and destroyed others." We are here deliberately told, by Christian writers of great repute, that the Jews were so grossly negligent about the "Word of God" that much of it is completely lost, and other portions they actually burnt and destroyed!! *Burnt the Bible!!!*

What outrageous sacrilege! Had it been *Infidels* who had burnt the Bible, what an affecting story we should have heard from the "gentleman of the cloth!" All the ladies in Christendom would have been in tears!

There is something connected with this matter which is not a little singular, and, to the true Christian, not a little *alarming*. We are assured that a belief in the Bible is essential to our eternal salvation. Now we have not the "Word of God," but only a portion, and that, according to St. Eucharis, a very *small* portion. "And therefore," says an able writer, "calculating upon our salvation according to the *quantity* of the Word of God, we shall be *a quarter saved, and three quarters damned*."

As a further corroboration of the preceding facts, I will give you a brief quotation from Dr. Campbell's Introduction to the Gospel according to St. Matthew, who not only admits that some of the "inspired" books have been *entirely lost*, but even mentions some of them by name. "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," says he, "the Book of Jasher, the Book of Nathan the Prophet, the Book of Gad the Seer, and several others, are referred to in the Old Testament, manifestly as of equal authority with the book which refers to them, and as fuller in point of information. *Yet, these are, to all appearance, IRRECOVERABLY LOST.*"

I have now given you a brief history of the Old Testament, up to the time of its translation into Greek, which event occurred in the year 287, B. C. Before this date, the "book of life" had been confined *to the Jews alone*. The individual so *fortunate* in abolishing this pious "monopoly," was an Egyptian King, Ptolemy Philadelphus. He wrote to the High Priest at Jerusalem, requesting to be furnished with a copy, and also seventy-two learned men who understood the Hebrew and Greek languages, for the purpose of translating it into Greek. His request was conceded; and the translation then made was called the Septua-

gint, from which, principally, the rest of our translations have been taken. It becomes a matter, therefore, of great moment, to ascertain whether this version was correct, for if not, presuming the Hebrew text was genuine, (but which I have shown was not the case) we cannot be certain that we possess, in our modern copies, the true "Will of God." Now, I distinctly affirm, and upon *Christian authority* too, that the Septuagint is not a correct translation.

Before I establish this point, I will give you an idea of the nature of the Hebrew language, and the great difficulty experienced in translating it. Simon, in his "Critical History," alluding to the meaning of the Hebrew words, remarks,—“It is *unquestionable* that the greater part of them are equivocal, and their signification *utterly uncertain*. Even the most learned Jews doubt almost *everything* about their proper meaning.” Bishop Marsh, in his celebrated "Lectures," No. 14, declares that—"The Old Testament is the *only* work which remains in the ancient Hebrew, nor have we anything like a lexicon, or glossary, composed while it was yet a living language."

One of the most learned Hebraists has declared that no two translators would agree in rendering any verb from the Hebrew. Godfrey Higgins says—"I am quite certain that I shall be able to show—to prove—that every letter of the Hebrew language has *four*, and probably *five* meanings." What an accommodating language for the priests, truly!

Le Clerc affirms, in his "Sentim," p. 156, that—"The learned merely *GUESS* at the sense of the Old Testament in an *infinity* of places, which produces a *prodigious* number of *discordant* interpretations."—The Christian Father, St. Jerome, too, in his Commentary on the 40th chap. of Ezekiel, states, that—"When we translate the Hebrew into Latin, we are sometimes guided by *conjecture*!" As an instance of the *guessing* abilities of our learned interpreters, I may refer you to that chapter in Genesis giving an

account of Noah's ark. With respect to the materials of which the ark is said to have been composed, our modern version interprets it to be *gopher wood*. Onkilhos translates it as being made of *cedar*; Castellus, of *Juniper wood*. The Arabic commentators declare it to be *box wood*; the Persian, *pine wood*. The celebrated Bochart declares it was *ebony*; and Dr. Geddes affirms it to be *wicker work*; while the distinguished Christian, Dawson, stoutly contends that it was made of *bullrushes daubed with slime*! Such are the singular difficulties attending the translation of the Hebrew text, and the contradictory interpretations given to the same words by different writers. It is obvious, from these facts, that no confidence can be placed in any translation from the Hebrew tongue.

While upon this subject it is necessary I should remind you that, up to the 5th Century, the Hebrew language was utterly destitute of any method of punctuation, as well as void of *vowels*. It was a mere mass of words without order or system. To ascertain the true signification was next to impossible. Dr. Du Pin observes:—"The Hebrew alphabet is composed of twenty-two letters, as well as those of the Samaritans, Chaldeans, and Syreneans. But besides these letters, *none of which is, at present, a vowel*, and by consequence, they cannot determine the pronunciation,—the Hebrews have invented *points*, which, being put under the letters, *serve instead of vowels*. These vowel-points serve not only to fix pronunciation, but also the *signification of a word*, because the word being differently pointed, signify things *wholly different*. This is the circumstance which has made the question as to the antiquity of the points seem of consequence, and hath, therefore, been treated of very prolixly. Some have pretended that these points are as ancient as the Hebrew language, and that Abram made use of them. Others make Moses the author of them. But the most common opinion among the Jews, is, that Moses having learned of God the true

pronunciation of Hebrew words, this science was preserved in the Synagogue by oral tradition, until the time of Esdras, who invented the points and accents to preserve it. Elias Levita, a German Jew of the last age, and very learned in the Hebrew Grammar, hath rejected this sentiment, and maintained that the invention of points was much later. He ascribes it to the Jews of Tiberias, about the 500th year of Christ, and alleged that this art was not perfected until about the year 1040, by two famous Massorites, Ben Asher and Ben Napthali."

From this it appears that it was not until the 11th Century that anything like certainty was given to the signification of that language in which it is said God thought proper to convey his ideas and wishes to poor human nature ! Wonderfully strange that he should have revealed his "will" in the most imperfect and ambiguous language in the world !—a language which the most erudite could not clearly understand. Common sense would have suggested the selection of the plainest and most perfect language possible, but, I suppose, "God's ways are not our ways." I hope they never will be, if they are as stupid as these.

I have made an assertion, however, which it is highly necessary I should substantiate. We have affirmed that the Septuagint translation, from which our modern versions are generally taken, is not correct. Now for my proof. My first authority is the learned Christian Professor, Du Pin. He remarks, in the work before quoted,—“In short, we must confess that there are *many differences* betwixt the Hebrew text and the version of the Septuagint, which arose from the *corruption* and *confusion* that are in the Greek version we now have. It is certain that it hath been *revised divers times*, and that several authors have taken the liberty to *add* thereunto, to *retrench*, and to *correct* divers things !” He further observes—“It is mere *superstition* to assert, as some authors do, that the Hebrew text which we have at

present, *is not corrupted* in any place, and that there is no *fault*, nor anything left out, and that we must indispensably follow it at all time. This is not only to speak without all evidence, and contrary to all probability, but we have every good proof to the contrary. For, in the first place, there have been differences betwixt the oldest of the Hebrew copies, which the Massorites have observed, by that which they call Keri, and Ketib, and putting one of the readings in the text, and the other in the *margin*, we have the different readings of the Jews of the *East*, and the Jews of the *West*,—the Ben Asher, and the Ben Napthali.”

My next authority is a still more learned writer than even Du Pin, and with whose works the English reader may be better acquainted.

I mean Bellamy, author of the New Translation of the Bible. In the introduction to that able and elaborate production, Bellamy denounces, in no qualified terms, the Septuagint version, and points out numerous errors and discrepancies of the most flagrant character. In Genesis, says he, c. 15, v. 11, there is a sentence, “he drove them away,” which ought to have been “*he remained with them.*” In the 6 c. v. 6, there is an expression “it grieved him at his heart,” which should be “he idolized himself at his heart,” implying *congratulation*, rather than *regret*. The sentence in the 22 c. v. 16, stating that “thus she was *reproved*,” should have been translated “thus she was *justified*,” meaning the very reverse to that we are trained to believe. The notorious exclamation of Jeremiah, in the 20 c. of his book, “O Lord, thou hast *deceived* me, and I was *deceived*,” should have been rendered “O Lord, thou hast *persuaded* me, thus I was *persuaded*!!” These and many other Holy blunders, the learned Bellamy exposes, and concludes by declaring that the authors of the Septuagint *did not critically understand the Hebrew language*. And yet, forsooth, it is the composition of these pious blun-

derers, which we are called upon to esteem as “Divine,” the *infallible* guide to “truth and salvation !” What a mockery ! What a delusion !

Bishop Usher, a man of vast biblical acquirements, goes further than either Du Pin, or Bellamy. He maintains, as quoted by Bellamy in his Introduction to the New Translation, that the version known as the Septuagint, is not only replete with the most serious errors, but that it is only a SPURIOUS copy ! !—The real Septuagint was never circulated, being lost at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, in which it was then deposited. The Bishop says, “The Septuagint translation continually *adds to, takes from, and changes* the Hebrew text *at pleasure*,” and that “the original translation of it was lost long ago, and what has ever since gone by that name, is a spurious copy, abounding in omissions, additions, and alterations of the Hebrew text.” If the opinion of the learned Prelate is correct, it follows that the Christian world have been propagating that as the genuine word of God, which is nothing but a forgery—a pious fraud—an imposition ! Looking at these circumstances, we may consider that the Christian scheme has been one of *damnation* rather than *salvation*. How the Infidel may pity the fate of the humble Bible-monger !

After all, it is not *quite* the “safest to believe.”—The Infidel who repudiates the Bible altogether, is nearer the truth than the Christian who disseminates a forgery—a *lie*.

In concluding this discourse, I purpose to show that this famous Greek version, the Septuagint, has itself suffered the most villanous mutilations, on being translated into Latin, and other languages. The Christian Father, St. Jerome, alluding to the Latin version of the Old Testament, taken from the Septuagint, asks, —“If they say the Latin copies are to be credited, let them tell me *which* ; for there are almost as many *different* copies *as there are manuscripts*, and if the truth be searched for among so many, why should

we not have recourse to the Greek original, in order to correct the faults that have proceeded either from the bad translations of the interpreters, or from unreasonable corrections that have been made by unskilful critics, and alterations that have happened through the carelessness of the copiers." We are told by St. Jerome, that Origen, the famous Christian Father, and opponent of the ancient Infidel Celsus, wrote a version of the Old Testament, from which many of our more modern copies have been taken. Jerome declared that in this translation, Origen altered the Greek text most abominably. The following are the words of Du Pin on this point:—"St. Jerome makes frequent mention of the *additions, corrections, and subtractions* made in the version of the Septuagint by Origen, and of the *bars and astericks* he made use of for that purpose. 'When Origen,' says Jerome, 'saw there was less in the *Greek* than the *Hebrew*, he did supply it from the version of *Theodotion*, and put an asterisk or star to it, to signify that this was to illustrate *what was obscure!*'"

This same Theodotion, we are informed by St. Jerome, was an *Infidel*, and that his version was confounded with the Septuagint. The French Professor says, "By the carelessness of the transcribers, and sometimes of those who set them to work, the *asterisks of Origen*, being misunderstood, or entirely left out, in some places, the *additions of Theodotion* were *confounded with the version of the Septuagint*, which, perhaps, moved Jerome to say, that Origen had corrupted and confounded the version of the Septuagint." Thus, then, does it appear, that in the version of Origen, from which many of our present copies are taken, the words of Theodotion the Infidel, were confounded with God's words!! What a medley! Oh! Christians, how do you know when you read your Bibles, but you are reading the words of an Infidel? Let me advise you, for your own sakes, never to read it again

Curwen, in his published Journal, from which so many extracts have been made by the press of late, records a fact which I cannot but submit to you ere I retire. He writes :—"I saw in the British Museum, the first Bible printed in Vellum, and turning to the 91st Psalm, v. 5, instead of 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, &c,' I saw the following,— 'Thou shalt not fear the *bugs and vermin* by night.'" I suppose the words as given in our modern version, is one of the "unreasonable corrections," spoken of by Father Jerome.

I have now, my friends, given you as far as my time would possibly admit, the History of the Old Testament, from the earliest period to the time of its coming into the hands of the Christians. In my next Address, I shall trace its history, in connection with the New Testament, to the present century, and supply you with facts equally as curious and important, as those which have this evening been read to you, and upon authority equally as respectable and unimpeachable. In retiring, I distinctly challenge any man to meet the testimony I have adduced. I court inquiry into the subject, as I believe it could only tend to hasten the downfall of that vast scheme of imposture which has, hitherto, strewn the mental pathway of man with error, ignorance, cant, and delusion !

LECTURE SECOND.

HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

FRIENDS—

In rising to resume the subject upon which I addressed you last Sunday evening, I deem it advisable to recapitulate the most important points then discussed. I adopt this course in order that parties, who may not have been present on that occasion, may observe the connection between the present and preceding discourse,—a connection which it is highly necessary should be distinctly understood.

We commenced by expressing our conviction as to the many advantages which must attend an inquiry of this character. We then proceeded to trace the History of the Old Testament from the earliest times. We remarked that a book said to be so *precious*—a book, a belief in which is declared to be so *essential* to the eternal salvation of every human being, had been known only to a contemptibly small section of the human race,—the Jews, until so recent a period as the year 287, B. C. Up to this time, that barbarous race had *alone* enjoyed the *péculiar* and *inestimable* privilege of its perusal. We expressed our astonishment at the extraordinary circumstance of a book containing the revealed will of an *omniscient and omnipotent Deity* remaining so long in comparative obscurity. We then proceeded to show that the Jews *themselves* were generally ignorant of the Sacred Law until so late a date as the year 628, before Christ, the book of the law being then *found*, we were told, by

an old priest named Hilkiab, in one of the houses of the Lord, and further, that in the interval between this period and the year 287, when it was translated into Greek, the "book" had been lost—*absolutely destroyed* during the Babylonish captivity. In fact, the Old Testament as it is now offered to us, was a comparatively *modern production*, being written by an old cunning priest named Ezra, only some 400 years before the time of Christ. We next stated that the Bible is *not complete*, being only a *small* portion of the "word of God,"—that many books were never transmitted to posterity in consequence of the ravages of the Chaldeans, and the carelessness and profanity of the Jews themselves, who not only lost *whole* books of the "Bible," but positively *burnt* others. We proved there was no proper canon or authorized collection of the Old Testament, until the Maccabees, which was only 200 years before the Christian epoch. We commented upon the translation of the Old Testament into Greek by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, in the year 287, B. C. We proved that this translation could not be depended upon, the most villanous mutilations having been made in the Hebrew Text by way of "alterations, additions, and omissions," and that similar liberties had been taken by the "Fathers" in translations subsequently made from this famous version.

We have thus brought our historical *review* of the Scriptures to the Christian era. This introduces us to a new field of discussion. We have now to consider, in connection with the old, a more recent production—the *New Testament*. This modern portion of the "word of God" is esteemed by the Christians as eminently valuable and important—so much so, that were the Old Testament *perfectly false*, the New Testament they conceive remains absolutely true.—Many Christians are disposed to admit, that just and reasonable doubts may be entertained of the authenticity and genuineness of many books of the Old

Testament, but the evidence in favor of the New they affirm is irrefragable. To this opinion, however, I must decidedly demur. I deny that the *testimony* in favor of the New Testament is unquestionable. I question indeed whether it is at all superior to the Old. In some respects, the Old Testament has the advantage, for the most important portion of that division of the "Holy Word" is *said* to have been written by the man immediately connected with it—Moses; but Christ—the hero of the New Testament, never wrote a line of that book, nor, according to Du Pin, did he ever order any one else to write it. Neither the Old nor the New Testament, however, have the advantage of the Koran. Mahomet declares that he received his Bible *directly from Heaven*, chapter by chapter. Now the Christian Scriptures are confessedly written by *priests*,—priests, as I shall show in a subsequent address, of the most ignorant, credulous and *worthless* character.

My friends, it is admitted on all hands that no portion of the New Testament was written during the life of Christ. The *very earliest*, as stated by the Christians themselves, was not written till the year 64—that is, rather more than 30 years after his death. But we have just reason to believe they were not written until *long* afterwards, *particularly the four Gospels*.

The *first* time any allusion is made to the Gospels was by the Christian Father, Ireneus, in the year 182, that is, *nearly 150 years after the time of Christ*. Dr. Lardner maintains that the five books of Ireneus against heresies, in which this reference is made, (vol. 3, c. 1,) could not be published earlier than this date. Tillemont and Massuett, two great French Christian writers, think the more probable date of this publication was 192, about the latter end of the time of Elutherus. (See the London edition of Dr. Lardner's works, in 12 vols., 1788, vol. 2, 154 to 159.)

Had these books been in existence prior to this

period, it is exceedingly strange they are not mentioned by any of the *Apostolic* fathers who lived at, or immediately subsequent to, the time of Christ, nor by the *earlier* Christian fathers, who flourished at the close of the first, and commencement of the second century. It is admitted, on all hands, that they are not named by the apostolic father Barnabas, who lived in the year 71—nor by Clemens Romanus, who flourished A. D. 96—nor by Hermas, who lived A. D. 100—nor by St. Ignatius, who lived in the year 107—nor Polycarp, 108—Papias, 116—Justin Martyr, 140—Tatian, 172—nor by Hegesippus, so late as the year A. D. 173.

The learned Dodwell, in his Dissertation upon Ireneus, says, “We have at this day certain most authentic ecclesiastical writers of the times, as Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who wrote in the same order wherein I have named them, and after all the writers of the New Testament. But in Hermas you will not find *one single passage, or any mention* of the New Testament, *nor in all the rest* is any one of the Evangelists named.”

I repeat, then, that *Ireneus* is the *first* who mentions the four gospels, which circumstance did not occur until 150 years after the death of Christ. And upon what authority does Ireneus present these four gospels as genuine? Why, on *his own* authority ONLY. Now let us suppose a case. Charles the 1st succeeded to the throne in 1628—some 200 years ago. Suppose that now, 1846, *for the first time*, a despicable priest like Ireneus should say that certain accounts of a man endowed with miraculous powers, who lived in London in 1628, and who worked miracles there, were published by Matthew Bay, Mark Randall, Luke Faust, and John Johnstone, (*persons not heard of before, or mentioned by any other writer of the time,*) of something miraculous that happened under Charles the 1st. What credit ought to be given or

ascribed to such a narration? Yet on such kind of evidence, is Christianity founded!

But pray who was this Ireneus, upon whose veracity so much depends? Why, a "Christian Father," and one of the most ignorant and credulous, of that superstitious, cunning, and I will add, *dishonest* class of men.

I shall have occasion to speak in very strong terms of the character of these "holy men" in my next discourse. I reserve, therefore, any lengthened remarks upon this head, until a future occasion. At this moment I shall only quote a brief passage from the *De Script. Interpret.*, page 73, of the celebrated Dr. Whitby, where he is alluding to the conduct of Ireneus and the Father Papias. The Dr. complains bitterly of their having "handed down the actions of the apostles and their disciples from *paltry rumors*, and *dubious reports*, and as having *scandalously deluded* the world with fables and *lying narrations*." If such were the general practices of Ireneus, what authority have we that these four Gospels, said by him to be written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are not, like the rest of his productions, "mere fables and lying narrations?" We have every occasion to believe, indeed, that such is the fact, especially when we remember the extraordinary reasons he assigns for there being four, and just four gospels inspired. His reasons are, "because there are but four quarters of the world, and every cherubim has *four faces*!" Strange animals those cherubims, unquestionably, but what a *reason*! How worthy of a priest! Every *cherubim* has four faces, *ergo*, there are only four inspired gospels! What logic! How *convincing*! How *unanswerable*! How worthy of the book they are written to support!

And we are "Infidels" because we cannot believe such farrago. Be it so. Better be the Infidel whose reason and common sense enables him to repudiate

such absurdity, than the saint whose blind credulity and narrow prejudices induce him to accredit it.

At the time Ireneus introduced these four gospels to the world, it is notorious there were many other "gospels" in circulation, which were held in high esteem by the majority of the early Christians. By what means, then, did Ireneus determine that these four gospels *alone* were genuine, and the rest spurious? Did the "cherubims with four faces" enlighten him upon the subject? Be that as it may, such an important question could not be determined except by one of enlarged intellect, erudition, and perspicacity. And was Ireneus such a man? Confessedly not. On the contrary, he was weak and credulous, and, as Dr. Whitby says, in the habit of writing "fables and lying narrations." It is evident, therefore, the authority of Ireneus upon this vital point is just worth as much as his logic.

To show you the great difficulty attending this portion of our inquiry, and the very unsatisfactory manner in which it was decided, I will quote from the 4th vol., page 260, of the Introduction to the Scriptures, second edition, by the Rev. J. H. Horne: "The accounts left us," says he, "by ecclesiastical writers of antiquity, concerning the time *when* the gospels were written or published, are so *vague, confused, and discordant*, that they lead to no certain or solid determination. The eldest of the ancient fathers collected the *REPORTS* of their own times, and set them down as *certain truths*, and those who followed adopted their accounts with *implicit reverence*. Thus tradition, *true or false*, passed on from one writer to another, *without examination*, until, at last, it became *too late* to examine them to any purpose."

I have said that at the time Ireneus first mentioned these four gospels, there were many others in circulation, some of which had existed, we are told, for nearly a century before, and were considered genuine

by the early Christians, and actually *read and quoted as the word of God*. There were, also, a great number of Epistles, Acts, Revelations, &c., which were also deemed genuine. The best list of these spurious productions is to be found in Toland's *Amynter*, as corrected by Jones in his *Treatise on the Canon*, copied into Horne's collection. I may name a few of the most important. There were the Gospel of St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Mathias, St. Bartholomew, St. Philip, Judas Iscariot, Thaddeus, and Barnabas. The Acts of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. John, St. Philip, and St. Thomas; and the Revelations of St. Paul, St. Thomas, St. Stephen, and the *Great Apostle*. There were upwards of fifty altogether. All these Gospels, Acts, and Revelations were, at one time, considered the "divine word." It was only by believing in these books that mankind could be "saved;" while the Gospels, Acts, and Revelations which are *now* offered to us were denounced as spurious,—as "fables and lying narrations."

And who are the most likely to know which are false and which are true? Those who lived at the time these books are said to have appeared, or those who flourished *centuries* subsequently? Undoubtedly the former. Viewing the subject, therefore, in this point of view, we have just reason to believe that those *rejected* gospels are more likely to be true (if any are so) than our modern version. And, oh, Christians! if such be the fact, in what a quandary are you placed? What a serious responsibility rests upon your pious shoulders? You have rejected the *true* gospels, and allowed them to fall into utter oblivion, while you have sanctioned that which is false and spurious!!! How many millions of credulous wretches have you by these means, led into eternal perdition? and if you believe in these books yourselves, *you* may also meet with the same unenviable fate! Miserable, mistaken, and unfortunate men! What a motley assemblage of deluded Christians,—believers in the

wrong gospel, will the honest but despised Infidel behold on his arrival at the *torrid* regions of eternity ! What a splendid run of business his Satanic Majesty will enjoy ! What a monopoly of "departed spirits" ! No "bad times"—no lack of *trade* with *him*. The Infidel may rest assured, when he is snugly reposing in his infernal domicil, that he will not *quite* be "lone in his glory."

To convince you that I am not indulging in mere idle surmise, or uncourteous banter, I will refer you to the writings of some celebrated Christians. *This*, I opine, will expunge *all* my "sins," for if you can only cite some Christian priest in favor of any proposition, it will be received with acclamation, while, were the same statements to come from one who is esteemed an "Infidel," they would instantly be reprobated as "blasphemies." I have affirmed, then, that many of these rejected gospels were held in high consideration, not only before, but *SUBSEQUENT*, to the sanction of our present canon. Nay, many learned men of *recent* times have had strong predilections in favor of many of these discarded books, considering them as genuine as any of our canonized version. Listen to the opinions of the learned Dr. Whiston, in his "Exact Time," page 28. He has declared that no less than *twenty-seven* of these books are genuine. "Can any one," says he, "be so weak as to imagine Mark, and Luke, and James, and Jude, who were *none* of them *more* than *companions* of the Apostles, to be our sacred and unerring guides, while Barnabas, Thaddeus, Clement, Timothy, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who were equally companions of the same Apostles, to be of *no authority at all*?" The Rev. J. Martineau, in his "Rationale of Religious Enquiry," observes,—“If we could recover the gospels of the Hebrews, and that of the Egyptians, it would be difficult to give a reason why *THEY* should not form a part of the New Testament; and an epistle actually exists, by Clement, the fellow-laborer of Paul, which

has as good a claim to stand there, as the Epistle to the Hebrews, or the Gospel of Luke. If none but the works of the twelve apostles were admitted, the rule would be clear and simple, but what are Mark and Luke, who *are received*, more than Clement and Barnabas, who *are excluded*?" And Archbishop Wake actually translated from the Greek the Apostolic Fathers of the first century, viz., St. Barnabas, St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, and St. Hermas, and strongly recommended them to the Christian world as "inspired," and "containing an *authoritative* declaration of the Gospel of Christ to us." (See Wake's Apostol. Fathers.) The learned Bishop Marsh positively avers that, "It is an undoubted fact that those Christians by whom the now-rejected gospels were received, and who are now called *heretics*, were in the right in many points of criticism, where the fathers accused them of wilful corruption."

I now approach a most material portion of our inquiry. From the era of Christ, until the latter end of the fourth century, there was no authorised collection of the writings of the New Testament. All was doubt, and dispute, for the first 300 years, during the very time everything should have been certain and satisfactory. If it was all doubt 1500 years ago, can it be all certainty now?

About the middle of the *third* century, however, *Origen*, the celebrated Christian father,—a man who had almost unlimited power in the church,—thought proper to make a selection from the great number of books then current amongst the Christians. The selection included the canon in circulation at this day. Through the dominant influence Origen possessed in the church at this period, his selection soon became popular, and in the year 363 was declared by the Council of Laodicea, to be the only "genuine Scriptures." It is more than probable, had not Origen made this selection, and possessed such supreme influence among the Christians of his day, that our present

canon would have been forgotten, like many of the *now*-rejected books.

Is it not, my friends, very extraordinary that a book like the New Testament, claiming to be of "divine" origin, should have remained so long in obscurity, and at last only saved from eternal oblivion through the presumption of a cunning and despotic priest, and finally determined to be genuine by the mere *dicta* of a council of priests, equally deceitful, and arbitrary as himself? This simple fact is alone sufficient to convince every unprejudiced mind that the Bible has no more to do with Deity than Gulliver's Travels or Tom Thumb.

An important question here suggests itself. How did this Council of Laodicea decide that our present canon of the New Testament is the true word of God? Did they receive a special message from heaven upon the subject? No, indeed, but this vital matter was decided solely by *vote*—decided as your Town Council might decide upon a police force, or the House of Commons upon a tariff. It *might* have happened the majority had voted against our present authorised version, and in favor of some of the rejected books. And what then? Why, that which we *now* esteem the "Word of God" would have been denounced, as were the repudiated copies, "as mere fables and lying narrations," and we should *now* have been promulgating as the "Holy Word" that which was *then* declared to be false and spurious. William Penn, the celebrated Quaker, in arguing that the Bible cannot be the rule of faith and practice, says—"I demand of our adversaries if they are well assured of those men who first collected, embodied, and declared them (the Scriptures) authentic, by a public canon which we read was in the Council of Laodicea, held 360 years after Christ,"—"I say, *how do they know that these men rightly discerned true from spurious?* Now, sure it is, that some of the Scriptures taken in by one council, were rejected by another

for apocryphal, and that which was left out by the former for apocryphal, was taken in by the latter for canonical. Now, visible it is, that they contradict each other, and as true that they hath erred respecting the present belief." (Penn's Works, vol. 1, p. 302, 303, 304, London, 1782.)

It is manifest, my friends, the whole matter rests merely on *human dicta*, and not *divine interposition*, and therefore the pretensions of the Christian world to the divinity of their "Sacred" oracle, are alike tuitous and absurd.

Presuming, however, this was a legitimate mode of determining the divinity of Scripture, a further question has to be considered, whether the men who composed these councils were competent to decide such critical matters? We must be assured they were enlightened and unprejudiced, and disposed to discuss the subject dispassionately. We must be certain they examined, *minutely* and *deliberately*, all the evidence, *pro et con*, in reference to the different Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelations, claiming to be genuine Scripture. For if they were not persons of this high character, acting in the enlightened spirit proposed, *no confidence can be placed in their decisions*. They would be calculated only to mislead,—to *confound* rather than to *settle* the controversy.

Now I aver most fearlessly that they were not men so distinguished and estimable. They were, on the contrary, excessively bigoted, prejudiced, and credulous—indissolubly wedded to their own crotchets. Their conduct, indeed, in those "holy councils," would have disgraced a pot-house.

My friends, these are bold assertions, and require very distinct proof. I will at once adduce it. I shall first quote from an eye-witness, upon the authority of the *Christian* writer, Tindal, in the 195th page of his work, entitled, "Rights of the Christian Church." "St. Gregory Nazianzen" says he, "in his letter to Procopius, tells him 'That he fled all assemblies of

bishops, because he never saw a good and happy end of any council, but that they did rather *increase* than *lessen* the evil, that the *love of contention and ambition always overcomes their reason!!!* ” Pretty men to determine questions of such vital moment !

But listen further to the words of the pious Nazianzen. He reiterates his determination of never going to any council, “*because nothing is to be heard there but geese and cranes!*” who fight without understanding one another.” An unique, pious, and *rational* assembly this, truly ! How characteristic of the priestly system ! We are here informed by one who was *present* at these councils, that there was nothing to be heard but “*geese and cranes,*” and it is upon the decisions of animals like these, that the authenticity and genuineness of our Bible rests. O, Christians ! when will you be ashamed of your credulity ? Little do these “*geese and cranes*” know the *deference* you pay to *their rational and enlightened dicta* !

Listen again if you please, to the opinions of Tindal, as to the character of these “*pious*” assemblies. Alluding, in particular, to the memorable Council of Nice, held in the year 327, at which the Emperor Constantine presided, he observes :—“*And if these accusations and libels which the bishops at the Council of Nice give in of one another to the Emperor, were now extant, in all probability, we should have such rolls of scandal, that few would have much reason to boast of the first Œcumenical council, where, with such heat, passion, and fury, the Bishops fell foul on one another, insomuch, that had not the Emperor by a trick burnt their Church memorials, probably they must have broke up in confusion !* After that Council was over, the Bishops made so great a *bustle and disturbance*, and were so *unruly*, that the good Emperor was forced to tell them “*that if they would not be more quiet and peaceable for the future, he would no longer continue his expedition against the Infidels, but must return to keep them in order.*”

“Indeed,” says Tindal, “the confusion and disorder were so great amongst them, especially in their *Synods*, that it sometimes came to blows ; as for instance, Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexandria, *cuffed and kicked* Flavianus, Patriarch of Constantinople, (at the second Synod of Ephesus) with that *fury* that *within three days after he died !!*” Oh! what *Christians*, and *Christian Bishops*, too!—the men upon whose *judgment* the Christian world depend for their *creeds* and their *Scriptures*! What a mockery!

But, my friends, listen still further. You have heard of their *bigotry* and violence. A word as to their *honesty* and *consistency*. Tindal, speaking of this subject, observes, “for though they were most *obstinate* as to *power*, they were most *flexible* as to *faith*, and in their councils complimented the Emperor with whatsoever creeds they had a mind to, and never scrupled to *recant* what they had before enacted, or to *re-enact* what they had before recanted. Nay, so very *variable* were they that St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, says that ‘*since the Nicene Synod*, we do nothing but write creeds; that while we *fight* about words; while we raise questions about novelties; while we quarrel about things doubtful, and about authors, while we contend in parties, there is almost none that is Christ’s. We decree every year of the Lord a new creed concerning God; nay, every change of the moon our faith is altered.’” Flexible gentlemen, indeed! They remind me of the words of Byron:—

“The moment you had pronounced him one,
Presto! his face changed and he was another,
And when that change was hardly well put on,
It varied, till I don’t think his own mother,
(If that he had a mother) would her son
Have known, he shifted so from one to t’other.”

The following fact, mentioned by Pappius in his “Synodicum of the Council of Nice” is, however, worth all the preceding, valuable and curious though

they be. Pappius informs us of the manner in which the true Gospels were selected from the false at that memorable Council. This was done, says he, "*by placing all the books under a communion table*, and, upon the prayers of the council, the *inspired* books jumped *upon the table!* while the false ones remained under!!" What a test of *truth!* What a proof of *inspiration!* It is quite a *stirring* argument. Who, after this, will venture to doubt the authenticity of the Scriptures?

From St. Cyril's Letters we learn that when the people of Ephesus were informed that the Fathers of the council had declared they might call the "Virgin Mary" the "Mother of God," they were transported with joy; they kissed the hands of the bishops—they embraced their knees, and the whole city resounded with acclamations. Happy creatures! After this, surely no one will doubt that "ignorance is bliss."

Enough, however, of these councils, their squabbles and their freaks. It must be evident to all of you, they cannot be relied upon by any one possessing ordinary intelligence, and if these councils are not to be depended upon, we have no means of ascertaining which of the immense number of Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelations, are really genuine, or if any are so. All is confusion, doubt, and uncertainty! A curious state of things when the book is said to be of *divine* origin.

We must now hasten to the conclusion of our history.—After the Council of Laodicea, in the year 363, there were two other great councils, one in the year 406, and the other in 680. The council of 406 rejected several books deemed canonical by the council of 363, but the council of 680 again restored them to the canon. Thus were the "Sacred Writings" the "Word of God" tossed like a battledoor, from sect to sect, and altered as the spirit of faction might dictate.

From this period (close of the 7th century) to the 15th, when printing was invented, the "word of God"

remained in pious seclusion. It was locked up in Monasteries in the exclusive possession of Monks.—The people were forbidden to read it. If they were detected in such an “*impious*” act, they were punished most severely. The priesthood at this period, therefore, had every opportunity to do what they liked with the Bible—to alter, add, or omit, just as it was most *convenient*. So greatly in fact were the priesthood afraid of the people reading the Bible that a Bill was actually introduced into Parliament to prohibit any one reading the Scriptures except those who were *authorized*.

When printing became general, the Bible, despite the anxiety of the clergy, was more accessible to the laity; and what was the consequence? Did it decide the grand question which of these numerous Scriptures were genuine? By no means. It only enhanced the doubt and confusion which previously existed. It split up the European World into numberless petty sectaries, all of which very politely promised each other eternal damnation. Up to this moment there are no two of the leading sects of Christendom who entirely agree upon any one of the versions or books of the New Testament, or *even of the Old*. Luther himself rejected the Epistle of James. And Erasmus and Calvin doubted of the Revelations. The Unitarians, headed by the Rev. N. Lardner, regard the Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, the 2nd of Peter, the 2nd and 3rd of John, Jude, and Revelations as doubtful, and, as they express it, not “*fit*” to be alleged as affording sufficient proof of *any* doctrine.

The New Testament published by the learned Evanson in 1807, contains only the Gospel of St. Luke, Acts, ten of Paul’s Epistles, and Revelations, and even *those* are said to “abound with manifest and numerous interpolations.” The Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and John, he *contemptuously* rejects as “spurious fictions of the second century.”

The Swedenborgians admit only the four Gospels and Revelations. The German Baptists, and the fol-

lowers of Servetus, do not receive the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the learned Professor Bauer in 1803 denounced it as an absolute "forgery." The 2nd Epistle to Timothy, and Titus, were rejected by Dr. Eichorn, and the 1st Epistle to Timothy in 1807 by Dr. Schelermacher, the celebrated German. The Gospel of St. John was rejected in 1820 by Dr. Bretschneider, and the 1st Chapter of Matthew and Luke are denounced by the Unitarians in the Monthly Repository as "*absolute falsities!*" The Catholic Bible, say the Protestants, abounds with innumerable gross errors, and in a great number of places, exhibits the most *shocking barbarity of style*, and the most impenetrable obscurity with respect to the sense of the *inspired* writers. Yet this Bible was pronounced authentic by a decree of the Council of Trent.

The Protestant Bible in return is denounced, even so lately as 1816, by the Pope of Rome, as "pregnant with errors;" and the old Protestant Bible is repudiated by the critic Broughton, who was himself a Protestant, as "perverting the text of the Old Testament in 848 places, and causing millions to reject the New, and to run into everlasting flames!" As for the *present* version, "its translators" say the learned Catholics, "ought to be abhorred to the depths of hell."

We exposed in our last lecture many blunders and false translations which had been made in the Old Testament. Had I time I could point out similar ones in the New. For instance, a ludicrous case of false translation appears in Mark 10, c. 25, where, according to the learned, the word in the original means a *cable rope*, not a *camel*. In the notion of a cable going through the eye of a needle, an association of ideas is preserved, but the other meaning is forced and ridiculous. Calmet, the famous Bible critic, declares that the 7th and 8th verses of the 5th c. of John's 1st Epistle, "are not in any ancient Bible."—This interpolation was an impudent stroke to support the trinity. Cappellus informs us that he was thirty-

six years in writing the books in which he detects the numerous errors and frauds of the Protestant Bible. That learned English Divine, Dr. John Mill, assures us that thirty years' researches upon the New Testament, alone enabled him to detect the enormous number of 80,000 different readings of that book. Could anything match the stupidity and monstrous credulity of calling such a work inspired and *infallible*? It appears that even the favorite maxim of Christians, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," has been considered by some learned writers to be an interpolation. The great Christian father, Origen, in his commentary on Matthew's Gospel, speaking of this sentence is forced to admit that "If indeed, there was no disagreement in other copies, it would be irreligious to suspect that expression was interpolated, and not pronounced by our Saviour. But now, alas! what with the blunders of transcribers—what with the impious temerity of correcting the text—what with the licentiousness of others, who interpolate or expunge, just what they please, it is plain the copies do *strangely disagree*."

Nay, my friends, it has actually been proved by a record in the Cronicon of Muis, that a *general alteration* of the four Gospels took place in the 6th century, by order of the Emperor Anastatius, who decreed:—"That the Holy Gospels, as written, *Idiotis Evangelistis*, are to be *corrected and amended*." This fact is mentioned by Scaliger, and Dr. Mill vouches for the truth of the record, and says that Messala was Consul at the time. Well might the New Testament be compared to Lord Chancellor Eldon's silk stocking, that was darned all over with worsted, until there was no silk remaining; so, in like manner, it is now impossible to say, with certainty, what this book was originally, by whom, where, or when, its component parts were written, or how many alterations, additions, contradictory translations, and forged interpolations, which, from time to time, it has undergone.

I shall sum up with the following startling observation of the distinguished *Christian*, Le Clerc. He curiously observes, in his "Disquisition on Inspiration," p. 27,—“There is no heresy in rejecting a book of the *Jewish* canon, as neither is it to reject *one of our own*; at least, the Protestants have not called Luther a heretic for saying that the Epistle of James is an Epistle of straw, no more than they have many of the learned for not receiving the Second Epistle of Peter, which a famous critic (James Scaliger) styles ‘a fiction of some ancient Christian misemploying his leisure time.’ The Jewish *Sanhedrim* may *EASILY* have received into their canon books that had *no divine authority*.”

Here we are told that it is no heresy to doubt *any* of the sacred writings, and that the Jews may have *easily* received into the Old Testament books which are *not* of divine origin. Strange production to be the word of God, *any portion* of which you may repudiate with impunity, and any part of which may not be of divine origin! And we are still called upon, in this, the boasted age of science and inquiry, to acknowledge such a book as divine. Oh! when will the intellectual and thinking of our race cease to connive at such absurdity? When will man throw off his mental leading strings, and act as a man? Will he never rise above his intellectual babyhood? Will he always adhere to the falsehoods, fancies, and delusions, accredited by his infantile credulity? Truth and humanity forbid it! Oh! when, then, will this change take place? When! my friends? *when men dare be honest—when they dare “keep a conscience,”* when they dare seize upon the precious jewel of truth *wherever* it is to be found, despite the anathemas of priests, and the sneers, insults, and persecutions of bigots. And may that day soon arrive. May the time not be far distant, when the sacred halo of reason and goodness will encircle the minds and the hearts of men!

LECTURE THIRD.

CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS AND APOSTLES.

FRIENDS—

IN our two preceding discourses, I furnished you with a compendious history of the Bible from the earliest times on record, to the present age. In developing that history I had occasion to lay before you facts of the most curious and extraordinary kind—facts resting upon the authority of *Christians themselves*—facts which must convince every enlightened and unprejudiced mind that the pretensions of the Christian world touching the Divinity of this notorious book are perfectly unwarrantable and absurd. I deemed it necessary to supply you with this history in order that all parties may be enabled to take an accurate, comprehensive, and, therefore, just view of this great and important question. It has too often, unfortunately, been the practice of Biblical disputants to confine themselves to a very limited and narrow consideration of this vast subject—to the possibility of some ridiculous miracle, the fulfillment of some foolish prophecy, the testimony of some obsolete historian, or the freaks of some fanatical, impudent, and cunning priest. To obviate this mistake, however, I am endeavoring, in the first instance, to familiarise you with the *general* bearings of this extensive topic.

On this occasion, it is our intention to expatiate upon a portion of our inquiry which is *intimately* and

inseparably connected with the history of the Bible. In fact, it may be considered part and parcel of the subject. I allude to the character and doings of those individuals in whose hands the Scriptures originally reposed, particularly during the first four centuries of the Christian era, when no authorised canon or collection of the books of the New Testament was established.

My remarks at this moment will more especially apply to this portion of "the Divine Word," as I have already *partly* anticipated this subject, in relation to the Old Testament, in my first address. The parties to whom I shall, in the first place, more particularly allude, are, the Apostolic and other Christian fathers.

It is a matter of the *utmost* moment to ascertain if those men were *honorable, ingenuous, and consistent*. We must inquire if they were persons upon whom an honest and conscientious man can place reliance; for if it can be shown they were *not* individuals of this character, the grand corner-stone of Christian evidence is undermined. You must remember that it is upon the authority of these "Holy Fathers" we are called upon to believe the Scriptures genuine. If, therefore, it can be demonstrated that their authority is exceptionable, we at once overturn the very foundation of the argument.

It is necessary I should here inform you, in order to explain how much depends upon the veracity of these holy fathers, that the ORIGINALS of the New Testament are *irrecoverably and absolutely lost*. We find, on referring to the Introduction to the New Testament, by Michaelis, the famous German Professor, as translated by Bishop Marsh, that the *most ancient* MSS. of this portion of the "Word of God" were written so lately as the 6th century,—that is, nearly 500 years after the time the originals are said to have been composed! The *originals* of the New Testament, indeed, *have not been seen*, says Michaelis, *by*

any writer extant, nor do they record that any one of their contemporaries had seen them. The "holy fathers" themselves do not profess to have seen the originals. Professor Michaelis further observes, "None of the most early fathers, as Ignatius or Tertullian, appeal to the originals, *or had seen them*;" and Professor Du Pin, in his "History of the Canon," &c., remarks—"We do not find that the two greatest men of the church, I mean Origen and St. Hierom, who had searched the ancient copies of the Scriptures with so much care and diligence, and have visited so many churches in the east, have ever spoken of the originals of the New Testament, written with the hands of the Apostles, which they would not have failed to do if there had been any in their times." Again, he observes, "But it hath been already made to appear elsewhere that it is no wonder that the primitive Christians, who had not a regular body of a state in which they lived, and whose assemblies were, on the contrary, *furiously* disturbed by the Jews and Pagans, had *lost the originals of their books*!"—"Nay," says he, "in the primitive ages, there was no talk of reading the Holy Scriptures in their originals; *any copy whatever*, provided it were used in the orthodox churches, *might be relied upon*, as if it had been the first original, written with the hands of the apostles"! The Rev. Dr. Campbell, in his work on the Four Gospels, page 117, also observes,—“The autographs, (the originals,) it is acknowledged *on all hands*, are *nowhere to be found*. What we have in their stead are the *copies of copies*, (through how many successors it is impossible to say) which were originally taken from these autographs.” Rev. Dr. Hug. in his Introduction to the New Testament, goes further, however, than Michaelis or Campbell. He actually affirms that, “It is probable there could have been no autographs of the New Testament at all.”

Since, then, the originals of the New Testament are absolutely lost, and, according to Michaelis and Du

Pin, have not been seen by *any* writer extant, or any of their cotemporaries, it is manifest *we have nothing to depend upon but the copies these holy men have presented to us*. I repeat, therefore, it is a question of vital importance—the question, indeed, to ascertain if these men are worthy of credit.

Now I unhesitatingly denounce them as persons unworthy of belief, whose testimony, at this period, would not be received in any court of law in Christendom upon the most frivolous case imaginable. Deliberately do I aver that *imposture and deception* was their *common* practice. They esteemed dissimulation and falsehood as *excellencies*, and not as *vices*—as *excellencies* to be *imitated*,—not as *vices* to be *despised*. To deceive the people, they considered a *positive virtue*. Not only did they think such infamous practices *necessary* to the *success of religion*! but actually *honorable* to it. In short, if there were at any time one body of men, as public teachers, more *deceitful dishonest*, and *despicable* than another, they were the class of whom I am now speaking,—the class upon whom the Christian world depend for the genuineness of their Scriptures.

This, my friends, may be considered a rash declaration. Let those, however, who labor under such a conception, listen to my proof. I shall first quote from the most able ecclesiastical historian of modern times—the German Historian and Professor, Mosheim. In his Ecclesiastical History, part 2nd, chap. 3rd, he makes use of the following extraordinary language:—"The interest of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by the monstrous errors that were almost *universally* adopted in this century, (the fourth) and became a source of innumerable calamities and mischiefs in the succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, '*that it was an act of virtue to DECEIVE AND LIE*, when by that means the interest of the church might be promoted;' and the second, equally horrible, though in another point of

view, was, 'that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after *proper* admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporeal tortures.' The former of these erroneous maxims was now of *long standing*! it had been adopted for *some ages past*, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and *pious frauds*! to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be *frankly* confessed, that the greatest men and most eminent *saints* of this century were more or less tainted with the infection of this *corrupt* principle, as will appear evident to such as look, with an attentive eye, to their writings and actions. We would willingly except from this charge Ambrose and Hilary, Augustine, Gregory, Nazianzen, and Jerome; but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation." He further observes, as translated by Vidal,—“At a time when he (Hermas) wrote, it was an established maxim with many of the Christians to avail themselves of *fraud and deception*, if it was likely they would conduce towards the attainment of any considerable *good*.” “And it was considered,” says he, again, “that they who made it their *business* to deceive, with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of *commendation* than *censure*!!” *Honorable men! Exemplary Christians! Holy Fathers!*

Listen to the French Protestant, Casaubon:—“It mightily affects me to see how many there were in the earliest times of the church who considered it a capital exploit to lend to *heavenly* truth the help of their own inventions in order that the new doctrine might be received by the wise among the Gentiles. These officious *lies*, they said, were devised for a *good* end.” Le Clerc, assenting to the opinions of Casaubon, observes, “That dissemblers of truth are no where to be met with in such abundance as among the writers of church history.”

Simon, in his *Critical History*, vol. 1, page 20, also remarks that "We ought not easily to give credit to the first originals of churches, (meaning the fathers,) every one strives to advance their antiquity as much as possible, and they make no scruple on such occasions to counterfeit acts when they have none that are true."

Dr. Conyers Middleton, a distinguished Professor at Cambridge, in his able work entitled "*A Free Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Church in the First Three Centuries*," has given a most elaborate and unanswerable expose of the tricks of these "Fathers in God." I refer you to the work itself, as it is easily to be obtained. M. Daille, a man whose learning and impartiality has never been impeached, in his celebrated work on the "*Use of the Fathers*," plainly says, "We find them (the fathers) saying things which they *did not themselves believe*. They are mutually witnesses *against each other*, that they are not to be believed absolutely on their *own bare word*." In book 1, chap. 6, he observes, upon the authority of St. Jerome,—"*Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris, have written largely against Celsus and Porphyry. Do but observe their manner of arguing, and what slippery problems they used.—They alleged against the Gentiles not what they believed, but what they thought necessary. Jerome adds, I forbear mentioning the Latin writers, as Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius, Victorinus, Lactantius, Hilary, lest I should rather seem to accuse others, than defend myself.*" Daille says the fathers "*made no scruple to forge whole books!*" His work on the "*Use of the Fathers*," was published in 1628, and translated by T. Smith, of Cambridge; the translation from which these extracts are taken.

M. Blondell, another learned French Protestant, in his *Epistle to Arnold*, 1701, states that there was more aversion to lying, more simplicity in adhering to truth, and more fidelity, among *profane* than *Christian* au-

thors. See also Scaliger, Epistle and Casaubon.—Bishop Stillingfleet, Irenerch, page, 296.—Bishop Fell, Cypriani, page 53.—Dr. Bennett, Directions for Studying the Thirty-nine Articles, page 66.—Bishop Burnett, on the same, Article 8, page 106.—Selden, Notes on Fleta, chap. 5.—Pezron, defence of his book, L'Antiquite, des Tems, page 224.—Dr. Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.—Dodwell's Dissertation on Ireneus.—Dr. Chapman, Miscellaneus Tracts, pages 191, 207; and Dr. Priestley, Disquisition on Matter and Spirit, 2nd edition, vol. 1, p. 393, Note. I could refer to a host of other authorities, all of the highest character, showing the utter dishonesty and deception of these "men of God." The following, however, must suffice. It is from a periodical accessible to all. In the Eclectic Review, of 1814, p. 479, is this passage:—"When we consider the number of gospels, acts, epistles, revelations, traditions, and constitutions which were put in circulation during the first three centuries, and which are *unquestionably spurious*, we find sufficient reason for examining with *care*, and receiving with *extreme caution*, productions attributed to eminent men in the *primitive* church.—Some of the early Christians do not appear to have possessed, in some points, a very nice sense of moral obligation. The writing of books under false names, and the circulating of fables, were not accounted violations of duty, or if the impropriety of such conduct was felt, the *end* proposed—the promotion of the Christian cause—was thought to justify the *means* employed for its accomplishment." A *divine* religion, truly, that could require, or would "*justify*," such ignoble and dishonest practices! Oh! protect *me* from such "religion!"

We will now speak of individual cases of deceit and imposture. The preceding quotations are only in general terms. First, of the Holy Father Origen. This man had immense influence among the Christians of his time. He lived in the third century. It

was Origen who collected our present canon of the New Testament, and upon whose *ipse dixit* the Council of Laodicea adopted it as the "Word of God." What, then, was the character of this person, from whom we receive our present Scriptures? Bishop Horsley, in his reply to Priestly, states that Origen "was not incapable of asserting in argument what he believed not, and that a strict regard to truth in disputation was not one of the virtues of his character." The Bishop further remarks, "Time was when the practice of using *unjustifiable* means to serve a *good* cause was openly avowed, and *Origen himself was among its defenders.*" A fine character this, to be one of those upon whose "authority" we receive the Divine Word!

Now of Eusebius, the Bishop of Cæsarea. Few of the ancient fathers are more celebrated than this individual. He is considered a very eminent authority among Christians. Tellimont declares, in his Ecclesiastical History, a work of 16 volumes, that "Without Eusebius we should scarce have had any knowledge of the history of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote at that time. All the Greek authors of the fourth century, who undertook to write the history of the church, have begun where Eusebius ended, as having nothing considerable to add to his labors." What is the character of this man, upon whom such dependence is placed? Why, it is as *honorable* as his predecessor's. He was one of those *honest* men who thought falsehood such a *convenience* and such a *virtue*. In the 12th Book of his "Evangelical Preparation," he devotes a whole chapter to proving that falsehood *ought* to be used whenever it is *required*; and he heads the 31st chapter with the following question—"How far it may be *proper* to use falsehood as a *medicine*, and for the *benefit* of those who *require to be deceived.*" Strange medicine, this! An admirable bolus, truly, for purging men of their virtue and integrity! In another place Eusebius says

of himself—"I have related whatever might redound to the *glory*, and I have *suppressed* all that could tend to the *disgrace* of our religion."

I am sure the *Christian* world ought to be much obliged to his Reverence, though the justice and honesty of his conduct is another question. But what says another Christian of the character of this virtuous priest? Baronius, who was a sincere advocate of the Christian faith, calls him "the great falsifier of Ecclesiastical History—a wily sycophant—a consummate hypocrite—a time-serving persecutor, who had nothing in his known life, or writings, to support the belief that he himself believed in the Christian system." So much for the character of this *main pillar* of the church, without whom we should know nothing of the early doings of the "faithful."

Another eminent Christian father was Ireneus, of whom I spoke at length in my last discourse, when showing he was the first who mentions the four Gospels. I then quoted Dr. Whitby where he accuses him and father Papias "as having scandalously deluded the world with fables and lying narrations."

Of the celebrated Justin Martyr, Mosheim distinctly says, that, "much of what Justin says is *wholly undeserving of credit*."

Of the fathers Clement, Alexandria and Lactantius, the Rev. Mr. Jones, in his "New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament," part 2nd, page 34, observes that it was the practice with them "to make use of testimonies out of *forges and spurious books*, to prove the very foundation of the Christian revelation.

St. Jerome, a man who stands very high among the early fathers, and author of the Vulgate, or Latin Translation of the Bible,—the translation now adopted by the Catholics,—very positively declares that—"I do not find fault with an error which proceeds from a *hatred* towards the Jews, and a pious zeal for the Christian faith." (Oper., tom. 4, page 113.) Ac-

according to this *honest* priest, if it is only for the *benefit of religion*, an individual may utter as many falsehoods as he thinks proper! The Bishop of Constantinople, Gregory Nazianzen, surnamed the "Divine," candidly admits to father Jerome, that "a little *jargon* is all that is necessary to impose upon the people.—The less they comprehend, the more they admire! Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said, not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them." Bishop Heliodorous, in his Romance of Theagnes and Charieles, modestly says, "a falsehood is a *good* thing when it aids the speaker, and does no injury to the hearers." And St. Synesius, early in the fifth century, declared that "the people were desirous of being deceived. We cannot act otherwise respecting them."

Indeed, Synesius! then what are we to think of your religion, whose moral influence is so weak and flexible that when people are immoral, the only way it can adopt to reclaim them, is to make them *more* immoral? Truly, these are *wonderful* "saints," strange "ambassadors of God!" But Synesius has not done. He further declares, and, I must say, very frankly—"For my own part, to myself I shall always be a philosopher, but in dealing with the *mass* of mankind, I shall be a *priest*." There is no doubt of it, *holy* Synesius!

As a specimen of the veracity of a very popular Christian father, St. Augustine, I need but state that he declares, in his 33rd sermon, and stakes his *eternal salvation* on the truth of the "fact," which he said *was as true as the gospel*, that while he was Bishop of Hippo Regius, he preached the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to a whole nation of men and women *who had no heads*, but had their eyes in their bosoms; and in countries still more southerly, he preached to a nation amongst whom each individual had but one eye, and that situate in the middle of the forehead. What next? How strange we can find none of the progeny of this singular race!

Now for the case of the *apostolic* father St. Her-
mas, one of the fellow-laborers of St. Paul. This
honest man wrote a gospel, from which the following
passage is taken. St. Hermas exclaims—"O Lord, *I*
never spake a true word in my life; but I have al-
ways lived in dissimulation, and affirmed *a lie for*
truth to all men, and no man contradicted me, but all
gave credit to my words." To which exclamation
the holy angel to whom Hermas was addressing him-
self replied, "As the lie was up now, *he had better*
keep it up, and, as in time it would come to be be-
lieved, *it would answer as well as truth*!!"

Such are the men upon whose *veracity* the authen-
ticity and genuineness of our Bible depends!

Were I a Christian, I should be ashamed to ac-
knowledge a production with which such characters
had any connexion. Well do I know with what ex-
ultation and contempt the Christian world would
denounce a book issued by the Sceptics, which rested
its evidence upon the testimony of such unblushing
impostors. Soon would they exclaim, with all the
bitter scorn so peculiar to them, "away with such a
book!" "it is a disgrace to the age!" "an insult to
religion!" "a libel upon God!" And why will they
not do the same with their own book, when they find
its evidence resting upon such infamous testimony?
O! but I presume *their* book is for the "promotion
of *religion*!" That alters the case. Being for a
"good" object, such conduct is deserving rather "of
commendation than of censure." Being for the "ben-
efit of the church," it is an "act of virtue to deceive
and lie."

My friends, while such morality finds currency
amongst mankind, well may falsehood and dissimu-
lation abound. While those are to be found, who can
assert that a book, resting its evidence upon the testi-
mony of men who deemed it a "*virtue*" to indulge
in such vile artifices, is "divine," the "Word of
God," the "revealed will" of an omniscient and

munificent Deity—every impostor may find his authority, and every rogue his apology.

Not only, however, were the Christian fathers a race of deceivers and impostors, but we learn from Burton's "Expositor," that the practice of unnatural crimes had been so common among the dignitaries of the church, that St. Bernard, in a sermon preached before the clergy, affirmed *sodomy* to be so common in his time, *that bishops with bishops, lived in it*. At the head of this phalanx of "holy men," stood the Emperor Constantine,—a man under whose *fostering* care, Christianity first rose to power and dominion. And who was he? A monster in human form. He drowned his wife in boiling water; put to death his son Crispus; murdered the two husbands of his sisters, Constantia and Anastasia; murdered his own father-in-law, Maximinian Hercules, and his nephew, son of his sister Constantia, a boy of only twelve years of age! And this man was the first royal patron of Christianity!

This grand system of dissimulation and delusion was not confined to the Christian fathers. The apostles themselves, indulged in the same pious freaks. Nay, Christ himself was infected with this corrupt principle. From the highest to the lowest, prevarication and deception seem to have been their "*modus operandi*." What says the New Testament itself of these notorious personages? We will see—I will take Paul and Peter as specimens of the Apostles. They were the leaders—the two men without whom Christianity would have died in its infancy.

First, of Paul.—In the 2nd Corinthians, c. 12, v. 16, he says, "But be it so, I did not burden you, nevertheless being crafty, I caught you with guile:" and in the 3rd c. of Romans, v. 7, he remarks, "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my *lie* unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" St. Jerome, the learned Christian father, says of this Apostle, in his apology,—“I will produce the

example of this Apostle Paul, whom I never peruse without thinking that I hear his thundering rather than read his words. Consult his epistles, particularly to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, where he disputes continually. You will see in the proofs he borrows from the Old Testament, with what address, what *dissimulation*, he manages his subject. Let us charge this upon him as a crime, and say to him, the testimonies you have used against the Jews, and other heretics, have one signification in their original, and another in your writings. We see here examples forcibly pressed into the service which aid you in gaining a victory, but have no force in the books from which you have taken them." In 1st Corinthians, c. 9, v. 19 to 22, Paul admits of having resorted to the most wholesale system of deception and hypocrisy. "For though," says he, "I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Indeed! mighty honest, truly! In Acts, 9, there is a long and particular account of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, and his stay among the disciples; while in Galatians, c. 1, v. 17, he solemnly swears that he *did not go*! In the account of his conversion, as given in Acts, c. 22, v. 9, Paul says, the men who were with him, heard not the voice of him who spake to him, while in c. 9, v. 7, he says *they did*. In c. 23, v. 3, he abuses the High Priest for sitting in judgment over him, while in v. 5, (only two verses afterwards,) he *pretends not to know him*. In c. 22, v. 27, he says, he is a Roman, but in c. 23, v. 6,

he declares he is a Pharisee, as his parents before him! Such was *honest* Paul. Now for *honest* Peter. In Luke, c. 22, v. 54 to 58, I find this *virtuous* man solemnly denying all connexion with the "divine" personage of whom he was the senior apostle, and with whom he had been in company only a short time before! The passage runs—"Then took they him (Christ) and led him, and brought him into the High Priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not." An admirable character for a Christian apostle!!

My friends, if I am not to be esteemed a Christian until I believe such prevaricating priests, I shall only become one when I cease to love truth, and, like the Christian fathers, consider it a virtue to deceive and lie.

Jesus Christ—I have said that he, also, was guilty of the unblushing dissimulation which characterizes his principal apostles, and the most eminent of their successors—the "fathers." In Mark, c. 4, v. 11 and 12, Christ says, "unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing, they may see, and not perceive, and hearing, they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." How charitable! These words, we are told, were uttered by the "Redeemer" of the world—he who was sent to lead the human race from the error of their ways, into the fold of truth and everlasting bliss! Strange mode to convince mankind of their errors, to allow them to hear and yet not under-

stand; and most convenient method certainly to lead them to truth by permitting them to see, and yet not perceive! Well might St. Jerome say, in his Apol., "our Saviour proposed questions to the Pharisees, but he resolved none. The crowd hear our parables—the disciples our truth!"

In John, c. 7, v. 8, we read of Christ resorting to a prevarication, so nearly approaching a lie, that I should esteem it a favor if you could show me the difference. "Go ye up unto this feast," says he, "I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet fully come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret." The priesthood, aware of the direct falsehood that would otherwise be manifest, have taken care to foist in the word *oupo*, instead of *ouk*. The true reading is, I shall not go up unto this feast. Griesbach, the latest and the most approved of the editors of the New Testament, has settled this question beyond controversy. He has ascertained the authenticity of *ouk*, and adopted it. Thus Christ says to his disciples, I shall not go, and yet, when they are out of sight, he does go, and that, too, by *stealth*! What disgusting and puerile deception! No wonder the "holy fathers" were such admirable "disciples!"

I have now carefully reviewed the character of the Christian Fathers and Apostles. I will ask you, as impartial persons, if I have not triumphantly established the truth of my allegations, *and that, too, on Christian authority?*

It is now necessary I should proceed to the latter portion of my address. I purpose to show that even supposing our remarks in reference to the fathers, from whom we receive the Scriptures, were incorrect, we are still not justified in accepting the Bible, as they offer it to us, as the true "Word of God." And why? Because they have so altered it to suit their conven-

ience—to promote party or sectarian purposes, that there is no possibility of detecting the *genuine* from the *spurious*. And hence the Bible, as we now read it, is as likely to lead us *from*, as *to* the truth, and therefore altogether inoperative for the great purpose for which it is designed—the salvation of mankind.

The first authority I shall adduce in confirmation of this opinion, is Professor Michaelis. He considers that “no one will deny that the early Christians, who differed from the ruling church, have *altered* the New Testament in numerous examples, according to their peculiar tenets,” and “so much so,” says the Rev. Mr. Nolan, in his Inquiry, page 460, “that little confidence could be placed in *any* edition.” The Rev. T. H. Horne, admits in the 2nd vol. of his Introduction to the Scriptures, second edition, that all M.S.S., the most ancient not excepted, have *erasures* and *corrections*; nor was this practice confined to a single letter or word. The Rev. Mr. Pope, in his treatise on the “Miraculous Conception,” affirms that “the Cambridge and the Alexandrian M.S.S. *swarm with corruptions and interpolations*.” Celsus, says Origen, charges the early fathers with having *three or four* different readings for the *same* text, or as he expresses it, “they *altered* the Gospel three or four different times, *as if they were drunk*, and when pressed by their adversaries, *recurred to that reading which best suited their purpose!*” Origen himself admits, says Du Pin, “there is a great discrepancy between the copies, which must be attributed either to the negligence of the scribes, or to the audacious perversions of others, or to those who correct the text by arbitrary additions or omissions, who oftentimes have put in and left out as they thought it most convenient.”—Here we are told by one of the fathers themselves, that matters were “put in or left out” of the Bible, just “as it was most convenient.” This shows how much we have to depend upon the fathers for the correctness of the Word of God. Du Pin remarks, and

he is a very high authority, as I observed on a former occasion :—"It cannot be said that no *fault* has crept into the Scriptures by the negligence or inadvertency of the transcribers, or even by the boldness of those who have ventured to strike out, add or change some words which they thought necessary to be omitted, added, or changed." *Necessary*, indeed! Then we must believe that God had said that which he ought not to have said, and omitted saying that which he ought to have done, or in other words, priests know better than God, what should be in the Bible! What next?

But, my friends, listen, I entreat you, to the words of James, the Librarian of the University of Oxford, a warm partisan of Protestantism. In his work on the "Corruption of the Scriptures," page 272, he says, "let us pass a step or two further, and inquire whether they have not *corrupted the Bible* in like sort, or worse rather, if it be possible, *a degree of impiety beyond the degrees of comparison*, and yet so plainly to be proved against the Papists, as he that hath but one eye to see, shall plainly discover it, and thence be induced to suspect the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, sitting in the holy place, and admiring himself as it were above the Holy of Holies. He shall observe infinite *varieties, contraries, and contradictions*, and oppositions between two Bibles set forth by two Popes, within *two* years; both commanded to be read and followed upon such forms as are mentioned in the briefs. You shall see the Popes *breathe hot and cold, say and unsay* the same thing *twice*, and, in fine, they have truly verified the Bible *to be a nose of wax!* plied and wrought into fashion for their own advantage. *A shame it is* that any Christian should presume to add, or take away aught from the Word of God; *yet, O! intolerable fraud*, not any simple Christian or layman, but the Bishop of Rome, chief pastor of the church, sole judge of all controversies, whose lips should preserve knowl-

edge, and his tongue speak no deceit, hath audaciously presumed *to add and take whole sentences*, to change the words of the holy writ, *into a clear contrary meaning*, to make as it were *white black, and black white!*"

This practice of altering the Bible to suit party purposes, is by no means confined to ancient times,—to the first four centuries of the Christian era. It has been adopted by the learned of every sect to the present day. They have well followed the example of the holy fathers, though, unfortunately for them, the printing press now tends to curb such audacious propensities.

The Rev. Mr. Cooper, in his Tracts, page 521, says distinctly,—“Were a Socinian to make a new translation, he would translate under the guidance of his Socinian opinions, and properly.” This is actually saying, when a person translates the Bible, he need not adhere to the real text, but give what interpretation he thinks proper. Oh! ye pious translators, how we must admire your honesty!

This is the charge which the Christian sects bring against one another—that they have altered the word of God to suit their peculiar opinions, and not adhered to the original. If so, we must concur with the Rev. Mr. Nolan, that we cannot depend upon *any one of them*.

To preclude the possibility of your supposing that I am desirous of giving you mere assertion without proof, I shall here quote from some of the leading sects. Hitherto, during the whole of this course, I have given you my authorities for every affirmation I have made. I shall continue to do so to the close.

Dr. Jones, in the Monthly Repository for 1826, (the Unitarian organ) says that “Trinitarians never have referred, nor never *will* refer to a single place throughout the whole Testament which could ever suggest the idea of the doctrine of three persons in one essence besides the controverted verse, the 7th of 1st John, c. 5.”

We are told, in the celebrated Unitarian Reply to

Magee, published in 1813, that this text is "an impious forgery," and, "it appears to be little less than blasphemy to retain it in a book which is represented to be inspired." Similar charges are made by the Unitarians against all the verses in the first chap. of Luke after the 4th. The whole of the second chap. is denounced as "spurious," and only "to serve the purposes of certain sects." The same with the first of Matthew, after the 17th verse; and the whole of the second. These passages inculcate the doctrine of miraculous conception, which is denied by the Unitarians.

The Rev. Dr. Campbell, in the introduction to his translation of the Scriptures, makes some strong remarks upon Beza, who published the edition of the Greek Testament from which our modern English version is taken:—"Here we have a man," says he, "who, in effect, acknowledges that he would not have translated some things in the way he has done, if it were not that he could thereby strike a severer blow against his adversaries, or ward off a blow which an adversary might aim against him!" How convenient this Bible is, truly!

The celebrated Methodist, Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary on the Bible, protests against those passages in the third chapter of Genesis, which declare that Eve was tempted by a *serpent*. He asserts it was a *monkey*, and not a *serpent* that tempted her.—A *monkey*, indeed! a most *bewitching* animal to tempt any one!

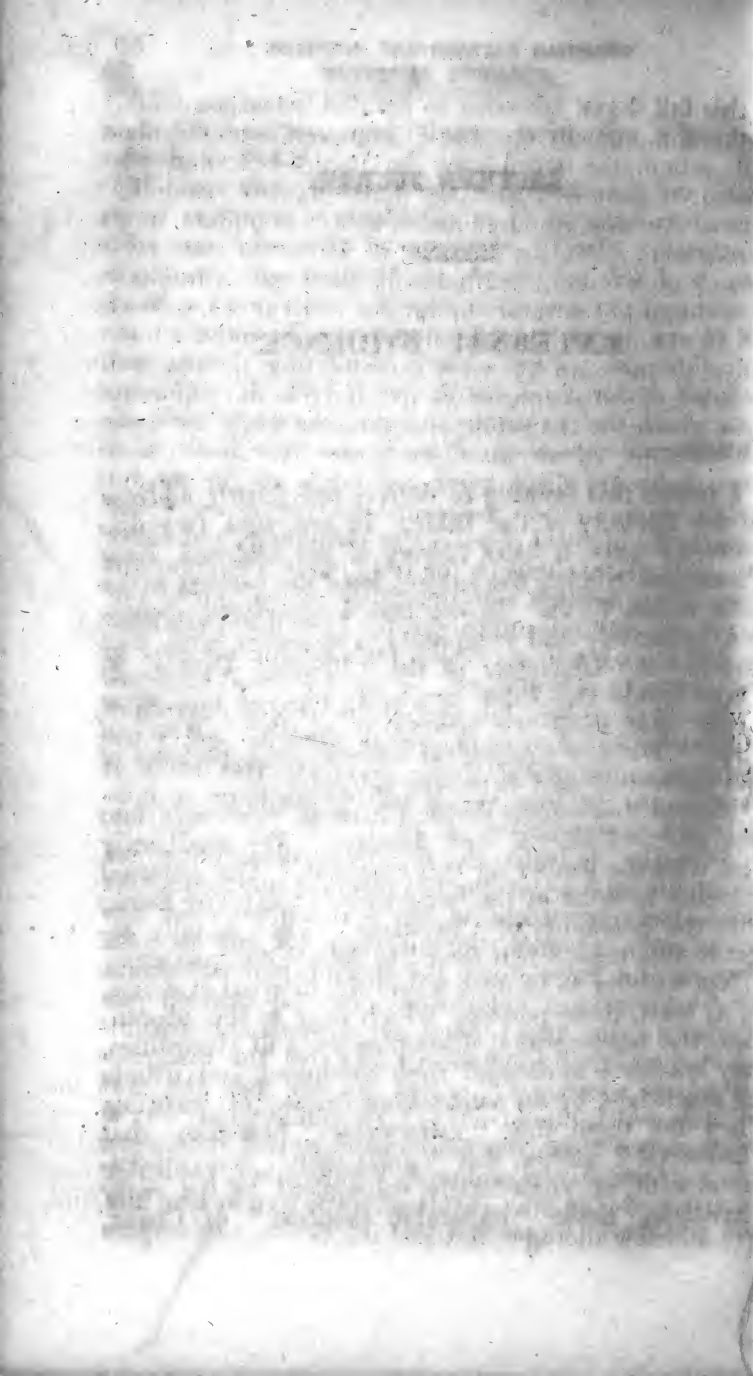
Mr. Bellamy declares that the story in the Old Testament about Balaam and his ass is a complete misinterpretation, and ought to be "immediately revised." He concludes his remarks upon this subject as follows:—"Really, it is time you should get rid of such childish notions. To say any more on such absurd conclusions would be a waste of time. Depend upon it, that, whatever they may do *now*, asses never spoke in the days of Balaam."

I could detain you, my friends, for hours, showing that alterations *have been*, or to believe some theologians, *ought to be*, made in the Word of God, but suffice it to say, as time is now far advanced, that according to the Unitarian version, there are no less than 150,000 readings of the Scriptures, all of which are more or less different. And this book, about which such innumerable and serious differences exist, and that, too, against the most learned of our race, is the *only* book which is to guide us to everlasting truth and joy! I am apprehensive it will prove a *blind* guide, for if there are so many contradictory readings as declared by the Unitarians, it will be 149,999 to 1 if we have the right one. Who will run the risk of eternal salvation or damnation at such odds?

But it may be said, people can exert their own intellect upon the matter, and judge for themselves. The Bible, they say, is so self-evident that none but an abandoned Infidel could mistake it. It is so palpable that "any one who runs may read, and so reading, fully comprehend." Not so, my friends. Michaelis says, in his Introduction to the New Testament, "No man is capable of understanding the New Testament, unless, to an acquaintance with the Greek he joins a knowledge of at least Hebrew, Syriac, and Rabbinic." Professor Campbell asserts, "that the Hebrew and Greek are absolutely necessary to him who is desirous of ascertaining the genuine meaning of the sacred volume." He further remarks, "To understand the Scriptures we should get acquainted with each writer's style. 2nd. Inquire carefully into their character, office, and situation, and the time, place, and occasion of their writing, and the people for whose use they wrote. 3rd. Consider the scope, &c., of the book. 4th. Where the phrase is obscure, consult the context: this will not always answer. 5th. If not, consider if it be any of the writer's peculiarities, if so, inquire what is the acceptation of it in other places. 6th.

If this fail, have recourse to parallel passages. 7th, If this fail, consult the Old Testament and Septuagint, where the word may be used: 8th, and the classic writers: 9th, and the Fathers: 10th, and the ancient version, modern scholiasts, annotators, and translators: 11th, the analogy of faith, and the etymology of words, which must be used with caution." In addition to these, or similar general rules, the Rev. Mr. Horne, in his Introduction to the Scriptures, furnishes us with ten rules for investigating the original meaning of Scripture words, five for that of emphasis, with which the Scripture abounds, and eight for parallelisms, of which three kinds are specified; then seven rules for discovering the sense by the subject matter, and by the context, and seven more for discovering it by historical circumstances, including ten particulars, such as the order, title, date, author, place where written, chronology, occasion, scope, analysis, biblical antiquities, &c. ! Then for investigating the scope itself, six rules, and for the analogy of faith, eight ! Then again for the historical interpretation, seven rules; for the interpreting of figurative language, twelve; one of which rules is, that "the literal meaning of the words is to be given up, if it be improper, or involve an impossibility, or is contrary to common sense !"

Then, in addition to all these rules, numerous others are given for interpreting the four kinds of metonymies occurring in Scripture; others for the metaphors; others for the allegories, the parables, the proverbs, the figures, and the spiritual interpretations. Then comes a great variety for interpreting the prophecies, the types, legal, prophetic, and historical, and no fewer than twenty-two for the interpreting of doctrines!! And yet we are told that the Bible is self-evident! Very; for a man may live a life-time before he can understand it, and then, after all, may be mistaken! Well may they say, that "narrow is the way that leadeth to everlasting life, and few there be that find it!"



LECTURE FOURTH.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

FRIENDS—

I APPEAR this evening to deliver our fourth address on the Divinity of the Bible. In our first two discourses I gave a brief history of the Old and New Testament, tracing the subject from the earliest to the most recent times. In our last, I considered a question intimately and inseparably connected with that history—the Character of the Christian Fathers in whose hands the Bible originally reposed, and upon whose *ipse dixit* we receive it as the “Word of God.” We now proceed to discuss other portions of this interesting and extensive subject.

Modern theologians divide Christian evidences into two parts—External and Internal. We shall only deal with the former on this occasion. The external evidence in favor of the Scriptures is a favorite theme with the generality of Christians. They usually resort to this topic when forced to debate the question.

Not wishing to be drawn into the internal evidence, or, at least, those portions which refer to the obscenities, the immoralities, discrepancies, and absurdities, they endeavor to conceal their weakness, and delude the multitude, by an ostentatious display of learning. They tell them this “memorable” historian, that “immortal” author, this “great man,” contemporaneous with, or immediately subsequent to, the early Christians, made “honorable mention” of Christ,

and Christianity, and thence infer the Christian scheme is divine.

Popular though this mode of determining the divinity of Scripture undoubtedly is, its unsatisfactory and fallacious character is apparent. Such evidence is manifestly incompetent to *decide* the truth of any doctrine or system. Before testimony of this nature can be received as *conclusive* it must be shown, in the first place, that these writers were "inspired" or infallible. If they were in the *least* degree *liable to err*, their testimony, on a question of this kind, must be received with consummate circumspection, if it be not altogether rejected. Were the whole of the external evidence usually adduced by the Christian world unquestionably true, I still maintain they have not established the divinity of their book. If it can be proved that the Bible contains absolute falsehoods, contradictions, and immoralities, (as will be shown in subsequent lectures,) all the *external* evidence in the world is of no avail. No external evidence can make that true which is palpably *false*—that consistent which is grossly *inconsistent*, or that moral which is manifestly *immoral*. The insufficiency, therefore, of this evidence to *decide* the question at issue, is obvious. Dr. Middleton, a distinguished divine of the last century, though an eminent exponent of Christianity, admirably remarks,—“Examining the external evidence is certainly *losing time*, and beginning at the wrong end, since it is allowed on all hands that if any narration can be shown to be false, any doctrine irrational and immoral, 'tis not all the external evidence in the world that can, or *ought* to convince us that such a doctrine comes from God.” The celebrated Dr. Vescimus Knox also confesses, in his Christian Philosophy, that “It is certain that the argumentative mode of addressing unbelievers, and a reliance upon *external* evidence, has hitherto *failed*, and will *never* convince them. Notwithstanding the stupendous labors of the writers of evidences, con-

tinued with little intermission, the great cause which they maintain *is on the decline*. Many of the most learned and able men of modern times, who were capable of understanding the historical, logical, and metaphysical defences of Christianity, have read them without conviction, and *laughed at their laborious imbecility!*" John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, is also obliged to admit that "*traditional evidence for Christianity is of an extremely complicated nature, necessarily including so many and so various considerations, that only men of strong and clear understanding can be sensible of its full force.*" (Letter to Warburton, p. 108.) Such is the uncertain, dubious, and unsatisfactory nature of external evidence, *as admitted by Christians themselves*.

I now proceed to show, however, that the external evidence which they *do* adduce, is, in many instances, completely spurious, in some so questionable as to be utterly inadmissible, and in others tells *against* rather than *for* the Christian system.

Before I enter upon the subject, I deem it advisable to name the profane authors who flourished during the first two centuries of the Christian era. Those who are *said* to have mentioned Christianity are the following: Josephus, A. D. 40, (see Jewish Antiquities); Pliny, A. D. 107, (see letter to Trajan); Suetonius, A. D. 110, (see Lives of Nero and Claudius); Tacitus, A. D. 110, (see Annals); Adrian, A. D. 138, (see Epistle to Servianus); Lucianus, A. D. 176, (see Dialogue on the Death of Peregrinus); Celsus, A. D. 176, (see Essay on the True Word, as quoted by Origen.) Those who are *supposed* only to have alluded to Christians are—Dio Pruseus, A. D. 98; Martialis, A. D. 100; Juvenalis, A. D. 100; Epictetus, A. D. 109; Arrianus, A. D. 140; Lucius Apuleius, A. D. 164; Aristides, A. D. 176.

Those writers who would be *likely* to refer to the Christians, *but who have not done so*, are—Philo, A. D. 40; Pliny, the elder, A. D. 79; Seneca, A. D. 79; Diog-

enes Laertius, A. D. 79; Pausanias, A. D. 79; Pompon Mela, A. D. 79; Appianus, A. D. 123; Justinus, A. D. 140; and Elianus, A. D. 141. Those who were *less* likely to allude to the Christians, and did not do so, are—Lucanus, A. D. 63; Petronius Arbiter, A. D. 64; Italicus, A. D. 64; M. Lucanus, A. D. 65; Flaccus, A. D. 65; Papinus Statius, A. D. 90; and Ptolemæus, A. D. 130.

In this discussion we have only to consider those writers who are actually said to have mentioned Christianity. In reference to the rest, I may just remark that it is a very *suspicious* circumstance they should remain silent upon the subject. Some of them were the greatest writers of antiquity, and could not possibly have omitted noticing all extraordinary events.—If Christ and his disciples, therefore, performed such wonders as asserted by their modern followers, why are they not noticed, favorably or unfavorably, by these distinguished historians? Philo, the most eminent historian of the first century, and contemporary with Christ, gives an elaborate account of the state of the Jews, and their afflictions under Augustus, Tiberius, and Caius Caligula,—the very period embracing the whole extent of Christ's life, but makes not the slightest allusion to Christianity, either in contempt or otherwise. This "great fact" is more remarkable when we remember that Philo was sent by the Jews as ambassador to Rome, only eight years after the death of Christ. Nay, there is every reason to believe if such a person as Christ was crucified, it must have been at the very time Philo was at Jerusalem. The silence of this great historian, living, as he did, at the very time of Christ, and in the very place in which his miracles are said to have been performed, together with the taciturnity of other eminent writers, is conclusive proof that the pretensions of Christians to the divine influence of their master, are perfectly gratuitous.

With respect to those writers who are said to have

mentioned Christ and his disciples, the *first* in order is that of the famous Jewish historian, Josephus.—This great man was born in the year 37, and died during that of 93. The passage in which he is represented as alluding to Christ, will be found in his “Jewish Antiquities.” It is as follows:—“At that time lived Jesus, *a wise man, if he may be called a man*; for he performed many wonderful works. He was the teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. *This was the Christ.* And when Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, they, who before had conceived an affection for him, did not cease to adhere to him. *For on the third day he appeared to them alive again*, the divine prophets having foretold these and many wonderful things respecting him; and the sect of the Christians, so-called from him, subsists *to this day.*” This passage, so strikingly in favor of the Christian system, and so highly and so exultingly prized by Christians, is beyond all question the most impudent interpolation ever foisted into the writings of any author. It is an absolute and unqualified *forgery*. It is supposed to have been introduced into the writings of Josephus about the fourth century, as it is not mentioned *before* that time. The man who was the first to disseminate such an infamous imposition was the Christian Father and historian Eusebius.—This conduct is quite in consonance with the character I gave of him in my last discourse. Tranquil Faber, a distinguished Christian critic, was the first to accuse that pious rogue of this forgery. The following quotation from the second book, chapter 12, of Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History, will give you an idea of the singular *integrity* of this “Holy Father,” and the deliberate, unblushing audacity with which he refers to this passage, which he *himself* wrote, and not Josephus:—“Now, when, as this historiographer, (meaning Josephus) by blood an Hebrew born, hath

of old delivered in writing these, and the like things concerning John the Baptist, and our Saviour Christ, what refuge or shift now have they, but that they be condemned as *impudent persons*, which of their own brain have fained commentaries contrary to these allegations?" It is evident Eusebius practiced this forgery, thinking that Josephus's great name might have its influence in silencing the enemies of Christianity. Well might he inquire "*how far falsehood might be used as a medicine!*" Dr. Lardner, admitting the anxiety of the Christians to obtain the testimony of this learned Jew, says, vol. 1, page 166, of his Jewish and Heathen testimonies,—“They (the Fathers) were fond of having his testimony, whether there was ground for it or not.” Modest and honest Christians, truly! We find that immediately after the period of Eusebius, this notorious forgery was adduced as a “glorious” proof of the divinity of Christianity! The fathers Jerome, Isedorus, Zozomen, and Calistus were remarkably ambitious of holding it up as a silencer to all sceptics and unbelievers. No one could doubt the divinity of Christ after it had been admitted by so great an historian as Josephus! I am happy to say, however, the more enlightened of the clergy of modern times are ashamed of the tricks of their pious predecessors, and silently abandon the evidence of Josephus. Faber, as before stated, repudiated it long ago. Bishop Warburton disowns it with contempt. He shrewdly observes, as quoted by Dr. Lardner, vol. 1, page 163,—“If a Jew *owned* the truth of Christianity, he must needs embrace it. We, therefore, certainly conclude, that the paragraph where Josephus, who was as much a Jew as the religion of Moses could make him, is made to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, in as strong terms as words could do it, is a *rank forgery, and a very stupid one too.*” Le Clerc, Du Pin, Blondel, Vandale, and Lardner, have also repudiated this passage; and Gibbon, in his “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,”

denounces it as "no vulgar forgery." Dr. Lardner, indeed, has entered into an elaborate and laborious refutation of this reputed testimony of Josephus. His reasoning is most masterly and unanswerable, and completely settles the question. I give you a brief extract. In vol. 1, chap. 4, and page 150, of his well known and voluminous work, he remarks,—“This passage is received by many learned men as genuine. By others, it is rejected as an interpolation. It is allowed on all hands that it is in all the copies of Josephus’s works, now extant, both printed and manuscript. Nevertheless, it may be, for several reasons, called in question. They are such as these:—This paragraph is not quoted nor referred to by any Christian writer before Eusebius, who flourished at the beginning of the fourth century. If it had been originally in the works of Josephus, it would have been highly proper to produce it in their disputes with Jews and Gentiles. But it is never quoted by Justin Martyr, or Clement, of Alexandria, nor by Tertullian, or Origen, men of great learning, and well acquainted with the works of Josephus. It was certainly very proper to urge it against the Jews. It might also have been fitly alleged against the Gentiles. A testimony so favorable to Jesus in the works of Josephus, who lived so soon after our Saviour, who was so well acquainted with the transactions of his own country, who had received so many favors from Vespasian and Titus, would not be overlooked or neglected by any Christian apologist. This passage was wanting in the copies of Josephus which were seen by Photius in the ninth century—I make a distinct article of this writer because he read and revised the works of Josephus as a critic.—He has, in his Bibliothecque, no less than *three* articles concerning Josephus, but takes *no notice of this passage*. Whence it may be concluded that it was wanting in *his* copies, or that he did not think it genuine. But the former is more likely.—This paragraph concerning Jesus interrupts the course

of the narrative, and, therefore, is not *genuine*, but an *interpolation*. In the preceding paragraph, Josephus gives an account of an attempt of Pilate to bring water from a distant place to Jerusalem, with the sacred money, which occasioned a disturbance, in which many of the Jews were killed, and many others were wounded. The paragraph next following this about which we are now speaking, begins thus—‘And about the same time, another sad calamity gave the Jews great uneasiness. That calamity was no less than banishing the Jews from Rome, by order of the Emperor Tiberius, occasioned, as he says, by the misconduct of some Jews in that city.’ This paragraph, therefore, was not originally in Josephus; it does not come from him, but is an interpolation inserted by somebody afterwards.” Such is the powerful and irrefutable reasoning of that learned Christian, whose arguments to this day remain uninvalidated. Some Christian writers have maintained that Josephus *must* have noticed Christ; but the Jews had *suppressed* all such passages, which spoke favorably of him. This, however, is an inadmissible supposition, since it is well known that Josephus published his works out of the reach of his countrymen, while residing at Rome, and living under the special protection of the Roman Emperors. If he did speak of Christ, we may reasonably suppose it would be in contempt, as Josephus remained all his life-time sincerely attached to the Jewish religion, and shows himself, in the whole course of his work, a zealous follower of the law of Moses. But there is no passage in the earlier copies of Josephus, favorable or unfavorable, in reference to Christ, as stated by Bigen and other ancient Christian writers, who, having attentively perused all the works of Josephus, express their surprise *at not having found the slightest mention made of Jesus Christ*. If, then, the testimony of Josephus is to be given up, *the main prop to Christian evidence is annihilated*. The

Christian world have no authority in confirmation of their pretensions *during the first century—the very time when authority is wanting.*

This *universal silence*, therefore, at a time so peculiarly and pre-eminently important, incontestably proves that the Christian system has no more authority to be divine, than the rest of the religions of the world.

We now come to remark upon the next writer who is alleged to have mentioned Christianity, viz., Pliny the younger, a distinguished Roman Author and proconsulate. The reference which this celebrated character is stated to have made to this system, will be found in his letter to Trajan, Emperor of Rome, written during the year A. D. 110. It commences—

“Pliny, to the Emperor Trajan, wisheth health and happiness :—

“Sir—It is my constant method to apply myself to you for the resolution of all my doubts; for who can better govern my dilatory way, or instruct my ignorance? I have never been present at the examination of Christians, (by others,) on which account I am unacquainted with what usages to be inquired into, and what and how far they used to be punished; nor are my doubts small, whether there be not a distinction to be made between the ages of the accused, and whether tender youth ought to have the same punishment with strong men? whether there be not room for pardon on repentance? or whether it may not be an advantage to one that had been a Christian, that he has forsaken Christianity? whether the bare name without any crimes besides, or the crime adhering to that name, be to be punished? In the meantime I have taken this course about those who have been brought before me as Christians: I asked them whether they were Christians or not. If they confessed that they were Christians, I asked them again, and a third time, intermixing threatnings with the questions; if they persevered in

their confession, I ordered them to be executed, for I did not doubt, let their confession be of any sort whatsoever, this positiveness and inflexible obstinacy deserved to be punished. There have been some of this *mad sect* that I took notice of in particular as Roman citizens, that they might be sent to that city. After some time, as is usual on such examinations, the crime spread itself, and many more cases came before me. A libel was sent, though without an author, containing many names (of persons accused.) These denied that they were Christians now, or ever had been. They called upon the Gods, and supplicated to your image, which I caused to be brought to me for that purpose, with frankincense and wine; they also cursed Christ, none of which things, as it is said, can any of those who are really Christians be compelled to do; so I thought fit to let them go. Others of them that were named in the libel, said they were Christians, but had ceased to be some three years, some many more; and one there was that said he had not been so these twenty years. All these worshipped your image, and the image of our Gods; these also cursed Christ. However, they assured me that the main of their fault, or of their mistake, was this,—*that they were wont, on a stated day, to meet together before it was light, and to sing a hymn to Christ, as to a God, alternately; and to oblige themselves by a sacrament, (or oath,) not to do anything that was ill, that they would commit no theft, or pilfering, or adultery; that they would not break their promises, or deny what was deposited with them when it was required back again; after which it was their custom to depart, and to meet again at a common but innocent meal, which yet they had left off upon that edict which I published at your command, and wherein I had forbidden any such conventicles.* These examinations made me think it necessary to inquire by torments what the truth was, which I did of two servant maids, which

were called *deaconesses*, but still I discovered no more than that *they were addicted to a bad and an extravagant superstition*. Hereupon I have put off any further examination and have recourse to you, for the affair seems to be well worth consultation, especially on account of the number of those that are in danger; for there are many of every age and every rank, and of both sexes, which are now and hereafter likely to be called to account, and to be in danger; for this superstition is spread like a contagion, not only into the cities and towns, but into country villages also, which yet there is reason to hope may be stopped and corrected. To be sure, the temples, which are almost forsaken, begin already to be frequented; and the holy solemnities, which were long intermitted, begin to be revived. The sacrifices begin to sell well everywhere, of which very few purchasers had of late appeared; whereby it is easy to suppose how great a multitude of men may be amended, if place for repentance be admitted."

I have given the whole of this letter, though tediously long, in order that no parties may presume I am anxious to suppress the real facts of the case. The Christian champions are much elated when adducing Pliny's evidence. They think it conclusive. But what say the more enlightened? The German literati have long been of opinion that this letter is a forgery. They maintain it is found in one ancient copy only, and not in the rest.

Dr. J. S. Semler, of Leipsic, one of the most learned of the German professors, adduces nine arguments against the authenticity of this letter. His celebrated work appeared in 1788. It is entitled "*Neue Versuche die Kircheuhistorie der ersten Jahrhunderte mehr aufzuklaren.*" His arguments upon this subject will be found, vol. 1, page 119 to 246. Semler was strongly supported by Corrodi, in his treatise entitled, "*Beytrage zur Beforderung des vernunftigen Denkens in der Religion.*" The main argument the

Christians allege in favor of the authenticity of this letter is, that it is cited by Tertullian and Eusebius, and that Aldin considers the MS. containing it, nearly as old as Pliny. Now Tertullian and Eusebius were both guilty of pious frauds, especially the latter, and, moreover, books at that time were not printed, but written. Every copy was a new edition, in which the transcriber might make what alterations he thought fit, few people, comparatively, possessing them. The age of Tertullian, or a little before it, was notoriously the age of Christian forgery. Nor was there any more difficulty in the interpolation of this letter than in the interpolations in Josephus and Longinus, which, till within this last century, have been successfully palmed upon the Christian world. At present, indeed, when the character of the fathers of the church, and their propensity to lying and forgery is universally known and acknowledged, no clergyman of eminence will venture to defend these passages. During the century intervening between Pliny the younger and Tertullian—that is, between 113 and 216, A. D.,—there was time enough, and opportunity enough, to propagate the forged copies of Pliny, and we well know there existed the disposition, it being esteemed “a virtue to deceive and lie.” The circumstances, then, which lead an enlightened and unprejudiced inquirer to reject the boasted testimony of this celebrated scholar, are—the undeniable fact that the first Christians were the greatest forgers that ever existed—that it was not the ignorant and vulgar, but the best scholars who practiced these forgeries—that religious persecution was inconsistent with the just and philosophic character of the Roman government—that so *moral* and *amiable* a people as the primitive Christians are represented by *their followers*, could not have been the *first* to provoke the Roman government to depart from its universal maxim of toleration and indifference,—that such persecution was quite inconsistent with the humane and

dignified character of Pliny—that it is unreasonable to suppose Christians were found in so remote a province as Bithynia, ere they had acquired any notoriety in Rome—the singular fact that the passage in question was found in *one* ancient copy *only*, and not in the rest—the declaration of the *German literati*, the most learned men in the world, that this epistle is not genuine—the unquestionable fact that Tertullian and Eusebius, the authorities in favor of its genuineness, were notoriously *liars* and *impostors*! The following, however, is the main objection to the genuineness of this letter. I hold it to be conclusive. Pliny is made to say to Trajan, that the Christians were accustomed to meet very early in the morning, and “sing a hymn to Christ, *as to God*.” Now this would have been a custom of which no Christian in Pliny’s or Trajan’s time, would have been guilty. They would have regarded it with horror, as blasphemy. The earliest Christians, were *Jewish* Christians—the Ebionites and Nazarenes.—Their gospel, seen by Epiphanius and Jerome, as they themselves relate, did not contain the two first chapters of Matthew. The early Christians among the Jews, did not believe that Jesus Christ was anything more than a mere man. They rejected with abhorrence his equality with God. The first *Gentile* Gnostics, the Corinthians, Marcienites, &c., did not advance the notion that Christ was God, or equal with God. Their gospel was the same as the Ebionites in this respect. The many—the multitude, were, during three centuries, in full persuasion of the modern Unitarian doctrine, in this respect. The belief of the Divinity of Christ, was not established till the council of Nice, in 325.

About all this, I have no fear of contradiction from any really learned ecclesiastic. I state these points as settled since the great controversy between Priestley and Horsely. No one, in the present day, will venture his reputation on a position so utterly unten-

able as that the Christians of Pliny's time, ever considered Christ as God, or ever spoke of him as on an equality with God. The passage, therefore, in question, representing the early Christians as worshipping Christ *as a God*, is, on the very face of it, a *post-Nicene forgery*—that is, written *after* the Nicene council—more than 200 years *subsequent to the days of Pliny*. It must consequently be set down amongst the other *pious frauds* of that period.

I now come to the third authority cited by Christians—Seutonius, a contemporary of Pliny. We will allow the Christians to make the best of this writer, for *if* the passage be genuine, it tells very strongly against the *divine* character of Christianity. If the early Christians really were such as he describes them, it is quite evident they had no more right to call their system inspired, than the followers of Courtenay or Joe Smith. In his *Life of Nero*, Seutonius thus speaks of them:—"The Christians—a race of men of a *new and villanous—wicked or magical superstition*, were visited with punishment." May I ask the Christians if they deem this the *true* character of their predecessors? If they do, I trust they will not boast either of the "wisdom" or the "virtue of their ancestors." Seutonius has another passage in his *Life of Claudius*, which is quoted by Christian evidence-manufacturers. Alluding to the Emperor Claudius, he remarks, "he drove the Jews from Rome, who were constantly *rioting*, Crestus being their leader." The priesthood strain this into an allusion to Christ and the Christians. Orosius, a Christian writer of the 5th century, who quotes this passage, does not pretend, however, to know whether it was the Christians or Jews who were thus expelled; and Dr. Lardner says, that "learned men are not satisfied that this relates to the Christians."—However, let the Christians of our time have the "benefit of the doubt," and what a compliment to their leader and their system!!! Here is Christ, the

son of, and yet co-partner with, God, kicked out of Rome as the poor rioters of Staffordshire and Lancashire were driven from their localities a short time ago. Are we to believe that their founder was such a riotous and disorderly personage? It is not to be wondered at, so many of his more ignorant followers exhibited similar propensities. Had Christ appeared in Britain in 1842, it is by no means improbable that he would have been incarcerated with the oppressed and starving operatives of the north.

We must now hasten to remark upon the favorite testimony of the Christian evidence-makers—the elegant and classical historian Tacitus. Few writers of ancient Rome have enjoyed more just celebrity than this distinguished and accomplished author, and, therefore, his evidence is highly esteemed by the Christians. It is considered a triumphant answer to all “unbelievers.” Certainly, when you have disposed of Josephus and Pliny, Tacitus is the only great author whom Christians will venture to quote as evidence. And what is his evidence? Listen. In his “Annals,” 15th book, chap. 44, after describing the great fire at Rome, during the reign of Nero, he observes,—“But neither all the human help, nor the liberality of the Emperor, nor all the atonements presented to the gods, availed to abate the infamy he lay under of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To *suppress*, therefore, this common rumor, Nero procured others to be accused, and inflicted exquisite punishments upon the people, *who were held in abhorrence for their crimes*, and were commonly known by the name of *Christians*. They had their denomination from *Christus*, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal, by the Procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, though checked for awhile, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, the source of this evil, but reached the city also, whither flow from all quarters all things that are vile and shameful, and where they find

shelter and encouragement. At first, they only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards a vast multitude discovered by them, all of which were condemned, not so much for their crime of burning the city, as for their enmity to mankind. Their execution was so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered over with the skins of wild beasts, and torn to pieces by dogs. Some were crucified; others, having been daubed with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night time, and thus burned to death. Nero made use of his own garden as a theatre upon the occasion, and also exhibited the diversions of the circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator, in the habit of a charioteer, at other times, driving a chariot himself. Till, at length, these men, though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated as people who were destroyed, not out of regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man."

Such is the celebrated passage of which we have heard so much—a passage which we are told furnishes a "beautiful confirmation of Christianity." I deny, however, that it confirms the Christian system; on the contrary, *it does the very reverse*. If we are to believe Tacitus, so far from Christianity being "divine," it is a "pernicious superstition;" so far from its early teachers and disciples being *inspired*, "they were held in abhorrence for their crimes;" so far from the early Christians endeavoring to do good, they were abhorred for their "*enmity to mankind*;" and so far from being unjustly punished, "they were *really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment*." If this passage proves anything, it proves that for which I am contending, and, therefore, cannot be taken as a *confirmation* of the divinity of Christianity. There are strong, *exceedingly strong*, reasons for believing that this memorable passage, like that of Josephus, is

an interpolation. These reasons I shall now lay before you, and solicit your kind attention. The 1st is, that this passage *is not* quoted *by any of the Christian Fathers*. It is next to *certain*, if such a passage had been in the early copies of Tacitus, that they would have quoted it, and especially if it be such a "*beautiful*" confirmation of Christianity, as they were ever anxious to obtain *all* the evidence possible. So *very* desirous were they for the testimony of Pagans, that they had no objections to manufacture such evidence when "convenient." The 2nd objection is, that it is *not* quoted by Tertullian, though he read and largely quoted the works of Tacitus, and his argument immediately called for the use of this quotation with so loud a voice, that his omission of it, if it had really existed, amounts to an extraordinary improbability.—This father has spoken of Tacitus, in a way that he could not have done if his writings had contained such a passage. The 3rd objection is, that it is not quoted by Clement Alexandrinus, who set himself entirely to the work of adducing and bringing together all the admissions and recognitions which Pagan authors had made of the existence of Christ, or Christians before his time. The 4th objection is, that it has been nowhere stumbled on by the laborious and all-seeking Eusebius, who could by no possibility have missed it, and whom it would have saved from the labor and infamy of forging the passage of Josephus, of adducing the correspondence of Christ and Abgarus, and the Sibylline verses, and innumerable others of his pious and holy cheats. 5th, (and this is a most important fact,) that there is *no vestige or trace of its existence anywhere in the world before the 15th century*, when it was published in a copy of the Annals of Tacitus, in the year 1468, by one Johannes de Spire, of Venice, who took his imprint of it, from a *single manuscript in his own power and possession*, and purporting to be written in the 8th century; that is, more than 700 years *after* the time of Tacitus!

The 6th objection, then, is, that it rests *entirely* upon the fidelity of this *one individual*, who would have every opportunity and inducement to insert such an interpolation, knowing the high character of Tacitus, and how desirous the priesthood were to procure such evidence. The 7th objection consists in the fact that the style of the passage is not consistent with the usually mild and classic language of Tacitus. The 8th and last, that Tacitus, *in no other part of his writings, makes any* allusion to Christ and Christianity.

These objections to the testimony of Tacitus, I hold, are unanswerable. I challenge the Christians to meet them. If they cannot be refuted, the Christian world have no evidence to adduce worth naming. Josephus and Pliny, we have proved to be *forgeries*; Seutonius, *if genuine*, tells *against* Christianity; and Tacitus, not only invalidates the divine character of the Christian scheme, but in all probability—so probable as to amount to a certainty—is as great a forgery as the rest. While Philo—the writer who, *above all others*, ought to have noticed in detail, favorably or unfavorably, the doings of Christ and his dupes, he being a contemporary, resident in the very seat of their movement, and having devoted three of his five volumes to the history of the state and sufferings of the Jews, at the very time Christ is stated to have worked supernatural wonders,—makes no mention of the matter at all!

We have, therefore, I submit, given a fatal blow to the fabric of external evidence. In our next address, it shall be razed to the ground.

LECTURE FIFTH.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

FRIENDS—

THE discourse I rise to deliver, is the fifth of series upon the Bible. Few questions are more important or more interesting, and yet upon no subject does there exist such irreconcilable antipathy to examination. It is deemed impious, not laudable—dangerous, not beneficial, to test the truth of the Scriptures. You are called upon to concede everything—question nothing. In no case is the argument “made easy,”—“*it is so, because it is so,*” more legitimate. The Bible is the Word of God—*because it is the Word of God.* This is the summary way in which the dogmatic Christians wish to silence the inquisitive sceptic. We are resolved, however, no longer to tolerate such antiquated conceit, but to examine with as much freedom and indifference the pretensions of the Bible as we would any other book. Nay, more; for its pretensions are greater, and, therefore, the investigation should be more searching.

In our last address, we entered upon that portion of our inquiry denominated *External Evidence*. We proved, at the outset, that such evidence, if true, is utterly incompetent to decide the question at issue, for if it could be shown, (as we shall show in subsequent Lectures,) that the *internal* evidence is false, the *external* is of no avail. In corroboration of that view, we cited the authority of Dr. Conyers Middle-

ton, Dr. Vescimus Knox, and the Rev. John Wesley. We then proceeded to demonstrate that the external evidence, which the Christians *did* adduce, was by no means conclusive. On the contrary, much of that evidence was completely spurious, some so questionable as to be utterly inadmissible, and others told against, rather than in favor of the Christian scheme. The testimony of Josephus we proved, in the caustic language of Bishop Warburton, was "a rank forgery, and a very stupid one, too." Pliny, the same. The evidence of Seutonius, we remarked, distinctly impugned the *divine* origin of Christianity. So did Tacitus, though there were insurmountable objections to the genuineness of his evidence.

We now proceed to meet the next testimony adduced by Christians—Pontius Pilate. For many centuries, the testimony of Pilate was held in high repute among the most learned Christians, being esteemed so conclusive, that it placed all doubt beyond the range of possibility. It was first quoted by Justin Martyr, in the second century, nearly one hundred years after the death of Christ. It was afterwards adduced by Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and others,—all "Holy Fathers," and, therefore, "all honorable men." Eusebius, of all the manufacturers of "pious frauds," the most extensive and successful, seems perfectly enraptured with the testimony of Pilate, esteeming it the grand stronghold of Christian evidence. Certainly, if the testimony of Pilate could have been relied on, it might have had some weight, as he, above all others, having sat in judgment on the case, ought to be familiar with the real facts of the matter. Unfortunately, however, for the Christian world, the testimony of Pilate,—the most direct and valuable that could have been offered, takes its place among the category of "pious frauds."

The supposed testimony of this memorable character, is contained in some letters—(Fabricus, in his

Codex Apocryphus, says five)—which it is stated Pilate, in his official capacity of Governor, addressed to Tiberius, Emperor of Rome. In those epistles, Pilate is represented as speaking very favorably of the Divinity of Christ, his miracles, and his resurrection. The language in which these communications are expressed, and the statements therein affirmed, are so hyperbolical and absurd, and entirely unsupported by any other writer or historian of the time, that it is quite manifest they are the mere compositions of those fanatical and unprincipled priests who deemed it “a virtue to deceive and lie.” Permit me to supply you with an extract or two from these *rare* productions. Who, I ask, who was not too *pious* to think—too *religious* to examine for himself, would believe that a Roman Governor, who *despised* the Christians, would write a passage like the following?—

“There was,” says he, alluding to the crucifixion, “darkness over the whole earth, the sun in the middle of the day *being darkened*, and the *stars* appearing, among whose lights the *moon* appeared *not*, but as if turned to blood, it left off shining.” He proceeds to say, referring to the resurrection, “early in the morning of the first of the Sabbath, the resurrection of Christ was announced by a display of the most *astounding* feats of Divine omnipotence ever performed; at the third hour of the night, the sun broke forth with such splendor as was never before seen, and the heavens became enlightened seven times more than any other day.” As a climax to this rhapsody, he is represented as exclaiming that “an instantaneous chasm took place, and the earth opened and swallowed up all the unbelieving Jews, their temples and their synagogues; *all* vanished away, and the next morning there was not so much as one of them left *in all Jerusalem*, and the Roman soldiers went *stark staring mad*.” Such an extraordinary and unparalleled convulsion is only mentioned in these contemptible epistles. No historian, great or small, who lived at the

time, makes the least reference to it. Josephus, who flourished at this period, and who, as a Jew, took peculiar interest in the welfare of his countrymen, is perfectly silent upon the subject, which would have been next to impossible if such events really transpired. The elder Pliny, who, about the year 75, wrote the "History of his own time," in thirty-one books, and was the most celebrated historian of that period, is quite silent upon this wonderful occurrence, which had it really happened, could not have escaped his observation. The younger Seneca, too, a voluminous writer, who was then about thirty-nine years of age, and must have been at Rome at the time, makes no mention of this wonderful phenomenon. Gibbon expresses the greatest contempt and indignation at these statements, and denounces them as alike *false* and *preposterous*. It is clear, therefore, that those epistles of Pilate, so highly prized by that distinguished *forgery* manufacturer, Eusebius, is nothing but a "cunningly devised fable" of the Holy Fathers, designed for the purpose of deluding those whom they thought were too ignorant to discover their impostures. I am happy to say that the more *enlightened* Christian evidence-makers, are now ashamed of the audacious impositions of their "Holy" predecessors, and as far as *decency* will permit, discard them. Some of the most eminent Ecclesiastical historians of modern times, Du Pin, of France, and Lardner, of England, have already repudiated these memorable epistles. Du Pin says, in the 2nd vol., c. 7, of his elaborate work on the "Scripture Canon,"—"We have in the *Orthographa* next to the epistle of Lentulus, a letter attributed to Pilate, as written to Tiebrius, which contains the same things; *but it is difficult to determine* whether this letter was *extant* in *Eusebius's* time, or whether it was not FORGED from his narration. Let this be how it will, there are several learned men who *question* the *genuineness* of this history, which has very little probability at the *bottom* of it. For how is

it *likely* that Pilate should write such things to Tiberius of a man, whom he *himself* had condemned to death? and though he *might* have done so, yet is it probable that Tiberius should have proposed to the Senate, the placing of such a man among the number of the *Gods*, upon the bare relation of a *governor*? And if he had proposed any such thing, who can imagine that the Senate would have submitted to it? Wherefore, though we cannot *absolutely* charge this narration with falsehood, yet it may, at least, pass for a *doubtful* piece." Yes, *very doubtful*, Dr. Du Pin! But his brother Christian and historian, Dr. Lardner, does much more than *doubt*; he declares that "the acts of Pontius Pilate and his letter to Tiberius, which we now have, *are not genuine*, but *manifestly spurious*!" (Vol. 1, c. 2, p. 316, *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*.) So much then, for this "glorious" evidence in favor of Christianity.

Now for another piece of evidence equally "*glorious*!" It is that of Publius Lentulus, Roman Governor—the predecessor of Pilate, as procurator of Judea. The testimony of this individual, was, at one time, the peculiar favorite of the orthodox Christians. Living, as he did, during the early career of Christ, and officiating as governor of the *very locality* in which his movements are said to have occurred, his evidence, of course, was deemed pre-eminently important. It will be found in the *History of Christ*, as originally written by Zavier. It is in the form of a letter, addressed as follows: "Lentulus, Prefect of Jerusalem, to the Senate and people of Rome, greeting." The letter proceeds to furnish us with a most glowing description of the person of *Christ*, which, if correct, would lead us to believe that he was really a handsome fellow. The letter commences, "At this time there hath appeared, and still lives, a man endowed with great powers, whose name is *Jesus Christ*. Men say that he is a mighty prophet—his disciples call him the *Son of God*. He restores the dead to life, and

heals the sick from all sorts of ailments and diseases. He is a man of stature, proportionably tall, and his cast of countenance has a certain severity in it, so full of *effect*, as to induce beholders to *love*, and still yet to *fear* him. His hair is of the color of wine, *as far as to the bottom of his ears*, without *radiation* and *straight*, and from the lower part of his ears it is *curled* down to his shoulders, and bright, and hangs downwards from his shoulders, [how precise!] At the *top* of his head it is parted after the fashion of the Nazarenes: his forehead is *smooth and clear*, and his *face without a pimple*, adorned with a certain *temperate* redness, his countenance *gentlemanlike* and agreeable, his *nose and mouth* nothing amiss, his beard thick, and divided into two *bunches*, of the same color as his hair, his eyes *blue* and *uncommonly* bright. In *reproving* and *rebuking*, he is formidable; in teaching and exhorting, of a bland and agreeable tongue. He has a *wonderful* grace of person, united with seriousness. No one hath ever seen him *smile*; but *weeping*, indeed they have. He hath a lengthened stature of body, his hands are straight and turned up, his *arms* are *delectable*. In speaking, deliberate and slow, and sparing of his conversation—the *most beautiful of countenance among the sons of men*."

Who after this will not be *enamored* of Christianity? I am sure it must be a matter of unspeakable lamentation that some of the leading Christian evidence-manufacturers of our day, are growing dissatisfied with this flattering testimony of Lentulus, and endeavor, very ungraciously, to throw it overboard. The French ecclesiastical historian, Du Pin, regardless of the admiration of his forefathers, disposes of this celebrated letter in the following slashing and unceremonious style:—"There is no need of showing the falsity of a letter attributed to Lentulus, written to the Senate and people of Rome, concerning the actions of Jesus Christ, since the forgery of it is self-evident." In what an off-hand manner these reverend

historians speak of the forgeries of their pious Christian forefathers! It appears to be nothing to commit a forgery—and especially a pious one—designed for the purpose of promoting religion. Well might Mosheim say that the holy Fathers deemed such individuals “deserving rather of commendation than censure.” But Du Pin continues, “They make Lentulus to write in the character of governor of Jerusalem, though *he never had that employ*. It is directed to the Senate and people of Rome, whereas after the Commonwealth was changed into a monarchy, the Governors usually wrote to the Emperors. That which is contained in that letter is *ridiculous*: therein is a mean and contemptible description of the person of Jesus Christ, [not very contemptible, I presume] therein it is said that our Saviour had light colored hair, long and loose after the mode of the Nazarenes. The style wherein it is written does not suit with the purity and politeness of Augustus’s time; in a word, *not one of the ancients* hath made mention of that letter.” (Vol. 2, c. 7, sec. 3, Complete History of the Canon, &c.)—Then I presume, Dr. Du Pin, it must go with the rest of the “pious frauds!” This really beautiful description of the “Saviour of the world,” which so bewitched our progenitors, must really sink into oblivion.—What a pity! O! cruel Dr. Du Pin!

We will now briefly remark upon the testimony of the Roman historian, Phlegon. I need say but little respecting his evidence, as the more learned Christians now acknowledge it to be a stupid forgery. But even if true, it is of little moment, the following brief passage being all that is said upon the subject:—“In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, there was an eclipse of the sun, greater than any ever known before, and it was night at the sixth hour of the day, so that even the stars appeared, and there was a great earthquake in Bithynia that overthrew several houses in Nice.” Gibbon has sarcastically observed—“The celebrated passage in Phlegon, is

now *wisely* abandoned." Very wisely, indeed ! and I doubt not the Christian priesthood will find it equally "wise" to abandon the rest.

I now come to consider the testimony of the celebrated opponent of Christianity, Celsus. He flourished towards the middle of the second century. He was one of the most distinguished philosophers of his day, and combatted the pretensions of the early Christians with consummate ability. He wrote a very elaborate work, entitled, "The True Word," as an expose of Christianity, which was answered by the Christian Father Origen. We are informed by Christian evidence-manufacturers that in this work Celsus argues as if all the events recorded in the Scriptures had *really* transpired, but denies that they were brought about through *divine* interposition. He believed they were produced by magic, as the tricks of the Egyptian priesthood, from whom, he affirms, Christ learned the secret art of imposture. Origen tells us that Celsus admitted Christ to have lived only a few years before,—was born of a virgin,—that angels appeared to Joseph,—that the Holy Ghost descended on Jesus like a dove when he was baptized by John, and that a voice appeared declaring him to be the Son of God. Now I ask upon what authority are we to believe that Celsus admits that such things were *mentioned* in his time? Have we the works of Celsus to consult? Confessedly not. We have only those portions which Origen, his antagonist, thought fit to furnish. The works of Celsus were *destroyed* by the Christians, publicly *burnt*, a fact which will ever remain an indelible stigma upon the early propounders of Christianity. The testimony, therefore, of Celsus rests solely upon the *ipse dixit* of Origen.—And who is he? An honest man? one upon whom we can place reliance? one who would not feel interested in falsifying the writings of Celsus? who would not give us an *ex-parte* statement, but just the bare facts and no more? By no means. On the con-

trary, he was one of those men who "deemed it a virtue to deceive and lie." And, moreover, he was the acknowledged adversary of Celsus; which fact alone would induce him to take every unfair advantage, and to represent his opponent's meaning as would best suit his purpose.

Allow me, my friends, to remind you of the real character of Origen, as given in my third discourse, when developing the conduct of the early Christian Fathers. Bishop Horsely, in his celebrated reply to Priestley, says that Origen "was not incapable of asserting in argument *what he believed not*, and that a strict regard *to truth* in disputation *was not one of the virtues of his character*," and that "the time was, when the practice of using *unjustifiable* means to serve a good cause was openly avowed, and Origen himself was amongst its defenders." I spurn, then, with scorn and contempt the authority of such a man. I denounce him as an impostor—though he was a Christian; a rogue—though he was a saint.

Further. Looking at the subject apart from the dishonesty of Origen, the testimony of Celsus, according to all legitimate ratiocination, is altogether inadmissible. It is based upon what logicians term a *petitio principii*—a begging of the question—proving a position *by that which is denied*. In this case it is establishing Christian statements, *by Christian statements*—a *modus operandi* which cannot be tolerated in an examination like the present.

It may not be uninteresting to lay before you a few of the objections which Origen says Celsus alleged against the Christian system. Apostrophising Christ, Origen represents Celsus as asking—"What need was there for carrying thee, while an infant, into Egypt, that thou mightest not be slain, for it did not become God to be afraid? And now an angel comes from heaven to direct you and your relations to flee into Egypt, lest you should be taken up and put to death, as if the great God who had already sent two angels

upon your account, could not have preserved you, *his own son*, in safety at home ! ” Alluding to the flight of Christ from his pursuers, he says, “ Christ was caught basely lurking and flying, being betrayed by those whom he called his disciples. ” Speaking of his crucifixion, he observes, “ If not before, why did he not *now*, at least, exert his divinity, and deliver himself from this ignominy, and treat those as they deserved, who behaved ignominiously both towards himself and his father ? ” He further remarks, “ You say that when you was washed by John, there lighted upon you the appearance of a bird. What creditable witness has said that he saw this, or heard the voice from heaven declare you to be the Son of God, except yourself ? ” Again he observes, “ Well, then, let us grant that all these things were done by you ; similar impostures were done by the Egyptians, and because *they* do such things, must we therefore esteem them to be God’s sons ? or must we not rather say that they were the artifices of wicked and miserable men ? Celsus also objected that “ no wise and learned men were admitted to the mysteries of their religion : let no man come that is learned, wise, or prudent, (for these things they accounted evil and unlawful,) but if any be unlearned—an infant or an idiot, let him appear and welcome ; thus openly declaring that none but fools, or such as are devoid of sense and reason, slaves, silly women, and little children, are fit disciples for the God they worship. We may see these trifling and mountebank impostors bragging great things to the *vulgar*, not in the presence and company of wise men, (for that they dare not,) but wherever they espy a flock of boys, slaves, and weak silly people, there they crowd in and boast themselves. ”

Celsus, says Origen, further observes, and, I must say, it appears much like the truth—“ The mother of Jesus being great with child, was put away by the carpenter who had espoused her, he having convicted her of adultery with a soldier named Pantharas.

Then, having been put out of doors by her husband, she wandered about in a shameful manner, till she brought forth Jesus, in an obscure place; and that he, being in want, served in Egypt for a livelihood, and having there learned some charms, such as the Egyptians are fond of, he returned home, and then, valuing himself upon those charms, he set himself up for a god."

I could give you more of Celsus's objections, which display no little ability and acumen, but my time will not permit; and, moreover, it would be somewhat irrelevant to the immediate question in debate. I hasten to expose the alleged testimony of another celebrated opponent of Christianity—Porphyry, who flourished about a century after Celsus. He was a philosopher of the Platonic school, and a man of extraordinary talent, learning, and virtue. He was eminent in all the departments of knowledge—literary, historical, and philosophical. As a writer his style was singularly elegant, dignified, and chaste—a very pleasing contrast to that of his pious adversaries. So renowned was he for his probity and morality, that he was surnamed "The Virtuous"—an appellation which few of the Christian fathers could justly claim.

Dr. Lardner, *a Christian*, says of Porphyry, the Infidel, Vol. 3, page 124, of his *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, and this is one of the most glorious instances of disinterested humanity on record—"Porphyry, as Eunapius assures us, had a wife named Marcella, a widow, with five children, to whom he ascribed one of his books, in which he says he married her not for the sake of having children by her himself, but that he might educate the children which she had by a former husband, who was his friend. Which showed, (says the Dr.) a *virtuous and generous* disposition. Nor, indeed, (continues the Dr.) do we meet with any reflection made upon his conduct. Cyrill, of Alexandria, in his answer to Julian, makes honorable mention of Marcella, as a woman of a phi-

losophical turn of mind, and for that reason esteemed by Porphyry." Such was the great opponent of Christianity. How different to the Bible-heroes and Bible-defenders ! Let me not hear again that impudent assumption of the priesthood—that no Infidel can be a *good man*.

About the year 250, Porphyry published a very voluminous work, (30 vols.) in refutation and exposure of the Christian system. It produced, as might be presumed from the high character and attainments of the writer, a strong sensation, so much so, that the poor holy fathers were quite frightened from their propriety. Answer it they could not. What, then, must they do ? O ! the priesthood were not long in devising a scheme which should refute the writings of Porphyry most effectively. Having, by this time, ingratiated themselves into the good graces of the Emperor Theodosius, whom they were in the habit of addressing in the fulsome language of "Theodosius the great !"—"Theodosius the wise !"—"Theodosius the impartial !" &c., they prevailed upon that fanatical despot to issue a decree against the writings of this enlightened and good man ; and, while they were doing, they deemed it advisable to complete the business, by including the writings of *every individual who had had the "audacity" and "impiety" to oppose Christianity*. The works of Porphyry, and all other heretics, were thus publicly burnt in the market-place. The following is an extract from the decree, as given by Dr. Lardner, Vol. 3, page 111 :—"We decree, therefore, that all writings whatever, which Porphyry, or any one else, hath written against the Christian religion, in the possession of whomsoever they shall be found, shall be committed to the fire ! for we would not suffer any of these things so much as to come to men's ears, which tend to provoke God to wrath, and to offend the minds of the pious." O ! kind and generous Christians ! To cap the climax, the same decree proceeds to enforce a belief in that silly doc-

trine, the Trinity, and declares that if any person will not believe it, "that besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authorities, guided by heavenly wisdom, may think proper to inflict upon them." O! those were glorious days for the priesthood! What a pity we cannot have a "revival!" How lamentable that the writings of an Owen, a Volney, a Voltaire, a Paine, a Gibbon, and a Hume, should be allowed "to come to men's ears, provoke God to wrath, and offend the minds of the pious!" Why are *they* not burnt publicly in our market-places? Would it not be a "glorious" sight to behold your Carlton Hill, or Arthur's Seat, blazing with the writings of these great and good men? But, alas! those days are gone by. A new era has dawned upon us. Thanks to the glorious advancement of mind and civilization. Thanks to the progress of knowledge as diffused by our Mechanic's Institutions, our Lyceums, our Halls of Science. Thanks to the mighty power of the printing press. O! it arose, and priestcraft trembled. The rusty chains of mental bondage fell from their hands, and the bright spirit of free inquiry flew from their iron grasp, arousing the intellect of the world from its debasing slumbers! Dr. Jortin, in his Ecclesiastical History, openly charges the fathers with the *common practice* of perverting, defacing, and *destroying* the works of their adversaries, and even those of each other.

To show the tact displayed by Porphyry, in his opposition to the Christian fathers, I will give you a few specimens of his style. "If," says he, "Christ be the way of salvation, the truth, and the life. and *they* only who believe in him can be saved, *what become of the men* who lived *before* his coming?" A rather awkward question, and it is not to be wondered at that the priesthood found it easier to *burn* it, than to *answer* it. "Some," says Porphyry, alluding to the Christian fathers, more especially Origen, "deter-

mined not to see the depravity of the Jewish scriptures, but to find out a solution of objections that may be brought against them, *have* adopted forced interpretations, inconsistent in themselves, and unsuitable to those writings, and such as should not only be a vindication of these absurdities, but afford likewise a recommendation of their own particular opinions.”—He says, “Origen, who was a Greek, and educated in Greek sentiments, learned from the Grecians the allegorical method of explaining the Greek mysteries, which he cunningly applied to Jewish Scriptures.” The 12th book of Porphyry’s, was written against the book of Daniel, which he states was not written by him whose name it bears, but by another who lived in Judea in the time of Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanius, and that the book of Daniel does not foretell things *to come*, but relates *what had already happened*! A curious way of *prophecy*ing, certainly! Porphyry again observes, “The Christians find fault with sacred rights and sacrifices, and incense, and other things in which the worship of temples consists. And yet they allow that this kind of worship began in ancient times *by the appointment of God*, who is also represented as wanting first fruits.” He refers to Genesis, c. 4, v. 3, as proof. “Christ,” says he, “threatens everlasting punishment to those who do not believe in him, and yet in another place he says, ‘With what measure you meet, it shall be meted to you again,’ which is absurd and contradictory.”

I will now remark upon what is called the evidence of Porphyry in favor of Christianity. The “Holy Fathers,” having so *admirably* disposed of the genuine writings of that powerful author, thought it would be a capital *hit* if they were to get up a work in Porphyry’s name, containing something favorable to Christianity. The idea was no sooner suggested than realized. To manufacture a “pious fraud” was a “virtue,” and, therefore, during the days of that respectable forgery-maker, Eusebius, a work appeared,

entitled the "Philosophy of Oracles," purporting to be written by Porphyry. This work contained many expressions highly complimentary to Christians, a few of which were the following:—"What we are going to say, may perhaps appear to some a paradox, for the Gods (meaning the heathen Gods) declared Christ to be a person *most pious*, and became immortal—moreover they speak of him *honorably*." Again the Oracle says, "He (Christ) was, therefore, a pious person, and went to heaven, *as pious persons do*, for which cause you ought not to speak evil of him."—These passages were seized upon by the Christian Fathers with the most exquisite exultation, and adduced as a triumphant evidence in favor of their system. Eusebius, as usual, was in exstacies upon the subject, and refers to the passage in the following terms: "We will not *insist* upon the testimony of *friends*, which might be of little value, [certainly not, if they were like him,] but those of *strangers*, not of our body. And of all the Greek historians and philosophers that ever were, none can be more fitly alleged *than the very friend of demons*, (Porphyry,) who in our time has gained so much reputation by the falsehoods he has published against us. In the work which *he* has writ of the philosophy, from Oracles, he has made a collection of the Oracles of Apollo and the other Gods, and good demons." Fabricus, Dr. Gregory Sharpe, Dr. Chapman, and Dr. Macknight, triumphantly refer as evidence to this unblushing forgery. This "Philosophy of Oracles," however, like the rest of the "pious frauds," cannot stand the scrutiny of honest criticism. The Christian historian, Du Pin, is ashamed of it, though he endeavored to palliate the conduct of Eusebius. But Dr. Lardner is the Christian who effectually disposes of this infamous fraud. In his "Jewish and Heathen Testimonies," he discusses the subject at great length, and in page 219 and 220, concludes his arguments as follows:—"The conclusion to be made from the whole is, that it is *not* a work

of Porphyry's, a heathen philosopher, and an enemy to Christianity, but a *Christian*, and a PATRON of *Christianity!!!*" "It is the artifice or *forgery* of some Christian, *designed and contrived to save the interests of Christianity* in general, and possibly likewise of some particular notion of the author itself." Alluding to the priest who forged it, the Dr. observes, page 221, "having formed a design to exhibit a correct testimony in behalf of Christianity, in the name of some learned Heathen, and to bring into it oracular answers of Heathen deities, he supposed that *no fitter name could be taken than that of Porphyry, who was in great repute for learning*, and who had published the bitterest invectives against Jews and Christianity, and the strongest arguments that have ever been alleged against the Scriptures, and he hoped by this work, to overthrow Porphyry's long work against the Christians, which had done so much mischief."

Such, my friends, is the history of this audacious piece of imposture so often boasted as a triumphant admission of the divinity of the Christian scheme.—It is quite equal to the rest of the pious forgeries which I have exhibited in my last three addresses.

We have now reviewed, at length, the external evidence usually adduced by Christians in confirmation of their system. I observed, at the close of my last discourse, that the facts I had then submitted, gave a fatal shock to the fabric of Christian evidences, and that, on this occasion, I should endeavor to raze it to the ground. I ask, respectfully, is it not fairly demolished? Where is the person who will attempt to prop it up? What is the whole of this evidence but a mass of perversion and fraud? Were it necessary I could tell you of other forgeries, of the forgery of the correspondence between King Abgarus and Christ—the forgery of the Sibylline verses—the forgery of the works of Hystaspes and Trismigistus—the forgery of the correspondence between Paul and Seneca, &c., &c. But I forbear, as the Christian priesthood them-

selves are now ashamed of them. My friends, was such evidence adduced in favor of the divinity of any other book, it would excite unspeakable disgust and derision in the mind of every enlightened and philosophic inquirer. I make not these statements to irritate my Christian opponents, but to induce them to open their eyes to the scene of delusion and imposture in which they have been so long confined. Let them look beyond the boundaries of their narrow prejudices, and contemplate the illimitable field of inquiry. Let them look for truth, not merely within the little confines of their own dark creeds, and inexplicable dogmas, but "wherever it can be found," for as Moore exclaims—

"When from the lips of truth, one mighty breath,
Shall, like a whirlwind, scatter in its breeze,
The whole dark pile of human mockeries;
Then shall the reign of mind commence on earth,
And starting fresh as from a second birth,
Man, in the sunshine of the world's new spring,
Shall walk transparent like some holy thing."

For the information of the reader, I should wish to state that the best works to consult in discussing the External Evidence of Christianity, are the following: The Bibliotheca of Fabricius, the small work of Bishop Casius on the Canon, in quarto, the translation of Lewis Ellis Du Pin's Ecclesiastical History, the Ecclesiastical History of Tillemont, the work of Basnage on the Jews, the Ecclesiastical Histories of Mosheim and Jortin, and the Dissertations of the former, but especially, the learned works of those really able divines, the Rev. Jeremiah Jones,—*"New and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament,"* printed at the Clarendon press, Oxford, 1798, in three vols. octavo; and the great work of Dr. Nathaniel Lardner, on the credibility of the Gospel History, &c., in eleven vols. octavo, 1798. The works of Dr. Priestley, in his controversy with Horsley, may also be consulted with advantage.

LECTURE SIXTH.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES.

FRIENDS—

We purpose this evening to discuss the *genuineness* of the Scriptures. This will necessarily lead us to consider, more particularly, the *internal* evidence adduced by Christians in support of their “inspired” text-book. This is unquestionably the most important portion of the discussion, for, as I formerly observed, if the *internal* evidence be false, all the *external* is of no avail. If we can prove *from the book itself* that it cannot be of divine origin, the dispute is fairly set at rest.

We affirm, then, in the first place, that the principal books of the Old and New Testament were *not written by those whose names they bare, and, consequently, on the very face of the subject, do we find* IMPOSTURE! We will consider the genuineness of the books *seriatim*, as given in the Bible, beginning with the books of Moses, viz., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These constitute the principal division of the Jewish Scriptures, and merit, therefore, especial consideration.

My first objection to their genuineness is, that there is no *affirmative* evidence that *Moses* wrote them, that is, *he himself* does not declare he is the author of them. It is the Jewish priesthood, and not Moses, who affixed his name to those precious compositions. There is not the least particle of direct evidence to

prove that he is the writer of them. I challenge both Jews and Christians to adduce it. If he were the author of these books, *why not plainly and honestly state the facts?* But Moses has not done so. On the contrary, the whole of them are written in the style of a neutral writer—a third person. They are written as if some historian was narrating events long gone by.

It is always, when his name is mentioned, “And the Lord said unto Moses,” and “Moses said unto the Lord,” or, “the people said unto Moses,” or, “Moses said unto the people”—the style invariably adopted by neutral writers.

Supposing that any one of you, giving yourself some name, say Jackson, was writing your own life, and recording an interview with an individual, would you not express it as, “I said unto him,” or “he said unto me,” and not as “Jackson said unto Johnson,” and “Johnson said unto Jackson?” Such is the natural language under such circumstances, and any other would be absurd.

There is no further reason for believing that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, than that his name occurs very frequently—that he is the hero of the tale—a reason that will apply to any memoir. Just as well, upon that ground, might you affirm that Johnson wrote Boswell’s life, Byron that of Moore’s, or Napoleon that of Scott’s.

To say that Moses *might* write in that style, is only to *beg the question*—to rest the argument upon a *doubt*. We have just as much right to suppose that he might *not*. Both prove the same thing—*nothing*. If Moses *were* the author of these books, what are we to think of the following queer passage?—

In Numb. chap. xii. ver. 3, it states, “Now, the man Moses, was very meek above all the men that were on the face of the earth.”

Think, my friends, of a meek man declaring to the world that there is no person upon earth as meek as himself! The idea is paradoxically preposterous.

If Moses *did* write that passage, it proves he was the very *opposite* character to what he there assumes; and hence, in writing, such an expression must have been violating the convictions of his own mind.

I have often heard phrenologists speak of the organs of benevolence, wonder, veneration, &c., being diseased, but if Moses was the author of such language, I should say his organ of modesty was deranged.

In Deuteronomy, the style strikingly proves the impossibility of Moses being the writer. The manner is essentially dramatic. The writer opens the subject with an introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses as in the act of speaking; and when he has made Moses finish his harangue, he resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death and burial of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs no less than four times in this book: from ver. 1 of chap. i. to the end of ver. 5, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of delivering his oration, and this continues to the end of ver. 40, of chap. iv. Here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

This style continues to the end of chap. xxxiii., when the writer, having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward and speaks through the whole of the last chapter. He begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah, &c., and *died* in the land of Moab, and that the Lord buried him in a valley, and that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day, that is, unto the time at which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. It is as clear as language can possibly be, that Moses is not the writer of these books.

Who, that is in his right reason, would believe that

Moses composed the following lines: "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peer, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day?" Are we to believe that Moses wrote an account of his own death and burial? and that, too, as is evident from the last line, many years subsequent to his dissolution? The man who would swallow such an absurdity, must indeed possess a most capacious appetite for the wonderful.

Paine quaintly remarks, when alluding to the concluding portion of the verses just quoted, which states, "That no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" — "To make Moses the speaker, would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself, and cries, nobody can find me—nobody can find Moses."

I proceed to propound other objections to the position that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. I hold that these books were written centuries after his time. The concluding sentence of the verses just read is my first proof:—

"No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

What does this mean? Does it not imply the lapse of a long interval between the day of Moses's death and the period when this passage was written?

My next argument is based upon Genesis, chap. xxxvi. ver. 31:—

"And these are the kings that reigned in Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel."

It is evident this passage could not have been written until *after* the *first* king began to reign over Israel, nay, until *several* had reigned; for the term "*any*," as here used, refers to a *plurality*. The father of modern Infidelity explains this argument with admirable force and clearness:—

"Now, were any dateless writings to be found, in

which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say, these things happened before there was any Congress in America, or before there was any Convention in France; it would be evidence that such writings could not have been written *before*, and could only have been written *after* there was a Congress in America, or a Convention in France, as the case might be; and, consequently, that it could not be written by any person who died before there was a Congress in the one country or a Convention in the other."

This case is precisely parallel to the passage in question; and it must be palpable, to any person of ordinary comprehension, that the words therein contained, could not have been composed until, at the very earliest, the days of Saul, the first king of Israel, that is, 357 years after the death of Moses—the former event occurring, according to the Biblical Chronology, 1095 B. C., and the latter 1452 B. C. To affirm, therefore, that Moses was the author of a book, referring to events which did not happen until nearly four centuries after he was snugly reposing in the "valley of Moab," is to affirm something more than an absurdity.

Again—In Genesis, chap. xiv. ver. 14, we are told that Abram pursued his enemies unto Dan. Now there was no place named Dan until after the death of Samson—that is, more than 300 years subsequent to the days of Moses. Moses, therefore, could not have written this passage. The place called Dan in the Bible, was originally a town of the Gentiles, called *Laish*; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town, they changed its name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe. In proof of this statement, I will refer you to Judges, chap. xviii. verses 27, 28, and 29:—

"And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were quiet and secure; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, be-

cause it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob. And they built a city and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city, Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit, the name of the city was Laish at the first." This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish, and changing it to Dan, is placed in the book of *Judges immediately after the death of Samson*. The death of Samson occurred 1120, B. C., and that of Moses 1452, B. C., and, therefore, according to historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan until 332 years after the decease of Moses. It is manifest, then, that *he* could have nothing to do with the authorship. Again—Could Moses have written the 8th verse of the 38th chap. of Exodus, which speaks of "*looking-glasses*," when glass was only invented by Benedict, an English monk, in the *seventh* century—(the year 674) *more than 2000 years after Moses was dead?*

It is clear, my friends, that no historian is worthy of credit, whose history contains gross anachronisms—allusions to facts of subsequent date, or to customs of subsequent date, or who employs words, expressions, and phrases, not conformable with the time of which he speaks. Such anachronisms furnish irrefutable objections to the genuineness of any ancient book, and the Pentateuch abounds in such discrepancies. Suppose a play published as Shakspeare's, contained allusions to the Battle of Waterloo, is not that enough to destroy all claim to genuineness? Would it not prove that Shakspeare did not write it? I could refer you to other anachronisms as gross as any I have just pointed out. Dr. Francis has noticed several.—"In the book of the Old Testament," says he, "we find abundant proofs that they have been written in an age greatly posterior to that of Moses. In Genesis, chap. xii. v. 6, we find these words—'And the Canaanite was then in the land,' which we learn from

the Bible, did not happen till after David, and could not, therefore, be written by Moses. The beginning of Deuteronomy is certainly not written by him, for he never passed the Jordan. He died upon Mount Nebor, to the eastward of it. In Deut. chap. xxxiii, we find this expression—‘There never was, in Judea, so great a prophet as Moses;’ and such could be pointed out in many places. There needs no comment to show that such passages could only be written in a posterior age, and when there had been several prophets after Moses.”

What, however, may be considered as more conclusive than all the rest, that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses, comprising, as it does, a large volume, is, that there were only two modes of writing known to Moses: one by cutting the words in stone, and the other by tracing them on soft mortar or plaster, which last method he expressly recommends to the Jews, Deut. chap. xxvii. verses 4 and 8. Perhaps the tables of stone used on the mount were also plastered, for Moses wrote thereon the commandments in one morning. To have written all the didactic part of the Pentateuch, either in one way or the other, would have been next to impossible; and, *when* written, what building could contain this *heap of stones*, or how were they to be *transported*? Why, it would have required as much stone to write out the five long books of the Pentateuch as would have built the finest street in Europe. When, therefore, the author of this collection, makes Moses *write the law in a book*, he conforms himself to the language and ideas of his *own day*, not of the days of *Moses*. The author, therefore, wrote or compiled it when books were in common use. There is no evidence of the papyrus being used for writing in the time of Moses, nor for a long time after. A writer in Walsh’s American Review, states that the Egyptian papyrus was not in common use till the time of the Ptolemies, and that Herodotus was the first historian who could have

made use of it. I scarcely need state that no long word, such as the Pentateuch, could have been written till the invention of that material, about one thousand years after Moses! You will remember in my first Lecture, I informed you that the first time the "law of Moses" was ever mentioned, was by the priest Hilkiah, 800 years *after* Moses, who says he *found* it. Found it! indeed! Why, if Moses wrote it, it must have been upon stone or plaster, and how in the name of common sense could such a prodigious mass of materials have been *lost*, and that for 800 years? It is a farce to talk of an elaborate history written on such materials—none but a Bible-reader could swallow such nonsense. With respect to the book of Genesis in particular, it is quite evident it must have been written by two different historians, at least, and therefore could not be the work of Moses, even supposing all our former objections were invalid. I principally refer to the first four chapters, detailing the creation. There are two different stories of this event, so opposite to each other, in style and fact, that no individual excepting a lunatic, without memory, could write them. The first story begins with chap. i. and ends at chap. ii. v. 3. The second begins chap. ii. v. 4, and ends with that chapter. Dr. Eichorn is of opinion that these books must have been composed by different writers. One story speaks of *God*, the other of *Lord God*—one concludes, chap. i. v. 27, with telling us *man and woman* were created, the other *begins*, with telling us they were *not*, (chap. ii. v. 5.) One says man and woman were created *together*, (chap. i. v. 27,) the other that the woman was made sometime *after* the man, (chap. ii. v. 18.) According to the *first* story there was no name given to the first man and woman. According to the *second* they *have* names given them—one says they were to have dominion over *the whole earth*—the other that their dominion was *limited to a garden*. One narrative gives *six* days of creation—the other (chap. ii.

v. 4,) relates the story as if there were only *one* day. The *first* account makes no mention of any particular countries, while the *second* appears to have been written many years later, after countries and places had acquired names, as the writer mentions Havilah, Ethiopia, Assyria, the Euphrates, the land of Nod, and other places.

My friends, it is a curious fact, if Moses was the author of the Pentateuch; or if these books had been in existence at all, at so early a period as alleged, that not the slightest mention should be made of them in any of the subsequent books of the Old Testament, until the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. From Joshua to the *second* book of Kings, (which was written *after* the captivity, as it gives an account of that event,) there is not the most remote allusion to any writings answering the Pentateuch, and even the name of Moses rarely occurs! From all these considerations, therefore, we are warranted in affirming that the Pentateuch could not have been written until after the Babylonish captivity, at least—that is, nearly ONE THOUSAND YEARS SUBSEQUENT TO MOSES. It is highly probable EZRA was the real author of these books, and he lived *only four hundred years before Christ*. The Talmudists, and the Jewish writers generally ascribe the Pentateuch to Ezra. In Nehemiah, we are told, as mentioned on a former occasion, that he was “inspired to re-write” the Jewish Scriptures, as they had been *absolutely* lost during the captivity. It was then, the Pentateuch was manufactured; and, therefore, we must esteem them as comparatively modern. Of this we are certain—no writer can be cited as referring to them, until the collection made by the Ptolemies for the Alexandrian school, and of these, the Greek version, resting on no authority, is the only one. This occurred only 300 years before Christ. I defy the priesthood to overturn this fact. The opinions I have thus given upon these writings, is strongly confirmed by the fact, that many of

the mysteries and dogmas recorded therein, are exact fac-similes of the mysteries of the Babylonians. The *creation* in six days, is a *perfect copy* of the *Gahans* of Zoroaster, the founder of the Babylonish philosophy, and what is still more singular, *the particulars* of each day's work, are also *precisely* similar, *in every respect*. The story of the *serpent and the fall*, was long famous among that people. The mythological deluge of Oxyges is *just the same as Noah's flood*, and the story of Adam and Eve in Paradise, is a mere copy of Zoroaster's first pair. The Talmud expressly declares that the Jews borrowed the names of the angels, and even their months, from the Babylonians.

The book of Genesis, has evidently been taken from that people, which could not have been done until after the captivity. Moses, therefore, could not have written that book.

It is a vulgar belief among Christians, that Genesis is the oldest book in the world. A more egregious mistake, however, could not be entertained. Sancho-niatho, the Phœnician historian, and the Hindoo and Chinese annals, are of much higher antiquity than Moses. The astronomical records of the Chinese, prove that there were men and astronomers in that country at the very time, the stupid Jews would persuade us, all the inhabitants of the world, except Noah and his family, were drowned by the deluge! Souceit mentions an eclipse of the sun, recorded in the Chinese history, which happened 2155 years before Christ, which is but 256 years after the deluge, at a time when the Bible informs us the earth was only inhabited by the progeny of Noah! while Egypt, at the very time, was then so peopled, that many cities could not contain the inhabitants, and China was not less populous.

The Hindoo astronomical observations, as far as they have been examined by the most learned astronomers of the age, Baillie, Le Gentil, and others, carry their antiquity between four and five thousand

years beyond our era, as may be seen in a paper written by the late Professor Playfair, of Edinburgh, and recorded in the second volume of the Philosophical Transactions.

In leaving this subject, I shall adduce the authority of some of the most distinguished Jewish and Christian writers, in corroboration of the position I have been maintaining.

Eben Ezra, a celebrated Jewish author of the twelfth century, wrote a work to prove that Moses could not be the author of the book of Genesis, or of *any* of the five books attributed to him; and the famous Jewish philosopher, Spinoza, who flourished in the sixteenth century, after quoting the opinions of Eben Ezra, shows that the Bible *did not exist as a book until the time of the Maccabees*, which was more than *one hundred years* after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. The distinguished Christian father, *St. Jerome*, confesses that he "*dares*" not affirm that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and admits that Ezra wrote those books. Sir Isaac Newton and Lord Barrington affirm that it was neither Moses nor Ezra who wrote them, but Samuel. Dr. Geddes, declares that it was *none* of the three, but Solomon, who composed them. The Rev. W. Fox, in his sermons published in 1819, remarks "THAT the *early* part of Genesis is a *compilation* of ancient documents, and *not the writing of Moses*, has been the opinion of some of the most able divines and *sincere* believers." A writer in the "Penny Cyclopædia," article Hebrew, expresses a similar opinion. "The language in which the Pentateuch is written," says he, "differs so little from that of David, Solomon, and Isaiah, *who lived many centuries after the time of Moses*, that *many* critics, supposing it impossible that a language should have remained stationary for so many centuries, have maintained that *NONE* of the books of the Old Testament were written *previous* to the time of David and Solomon. *It is not very easy to disprove this position.*" So say I.

The distinguished Christian Professor, Dupin, positively asserts, that "we are not certainly assured of the true authors of *most* of the books of the Old Testament." Le Clerc, also, as quoted by Dupin, intimates that the Pentateuch was a *great deal more modern than Moses*, and it may be conjectured to have been composed by some *Jewish Priests*, sent from Babylon to instruct the new inhabitants of Palestine.

I must now hasten to review the remaining books of the Scriptures. Having devoted so much of our time to the Pentateuch, we shall, necessarily, be somewhat brief with the rest.

Joshua—The objections urged against the books of Moses, will apply, in a great degree, to Joshua. It is written in the same neutral style. The historian, and not Joshua, speaks. The death and burial of Joshua is recorded, though we are to believe he himself wrote it! In chap. xxiv., 29th and 30th verses, it states, "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-serah, which is Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash."

The Christian priesthood declare, that Joshua is the author of a book containing this passage. How matchless is the impudence and stupidity of these men! In the following verse, (the 31st,) we read, "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." In the name of reason could it be Joshua who here relates what people had done ages after he was in heaven?

In the 27th ver. of the 6th chap., there occurs a passage which shows, if Joshua wrote it, that *his* modesty was in the same condition as that of his predecessor, Moses. It is given in the following classic language: "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his

fame was noised throughout all the country." There are many passages in Joshua which prove that that book could not have been written until many centuries after the time alleged by the Christian world. One of these is the following. Time will not admit of my giving more. It states, in the 15th chap. of Joshua, ver. 63, that "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem, unto this day." Now the Israelites did not dwell in Jerusalem, until after the time of David. Jerusalem did not come into the hands of the Jews, until subdued by David, as mentioned in the 2d Book of Samuel, chap. v., ver. 4; and in the Chronicles. This passage, therefore, could not be written until subsequent to the reign of David, that is, 370 years after the death of Joshua. When we take into account the expression, "unto this day," the book could not be composed until long after even David's time, as those words imply a considerable interval between the period of writing, and the event referred to.

We now come to *Judges*. We need say little of this book. It must take the fate of Joshua, being, in all probability, from the identity of the style, and other circumstances, the work of the same pen. In the 1st chap., ver. 8, there is a similar reference to Jerusalem, as in Joshua, "Now the children of Judah, had fought against Jerusalem, and *taken it*." This clearly evinces that the book could not have been written until after David's time, and my remarks upon this point, will be as valid in relation to Judges as Joshua.

I pass, therefore, to *Samuel*, not deeming the silly and indecent story of *Ruth*, worthy of notice. The books of Samuel are evidently not written by him, unless he was as *clever* as Moses and Joshua; for in the 1st Book, chap. xxv., ver. 1, there is an elaborate account of *his death and funeral*! This event transpired, according to the Bible chronology, in the year 1060 B. C.; yet the history of the very book, in which

his death is recorded, is brought down to the year 1056, to the death of *Saul*, which occurred four years *after* that of Samuel. The 2nd Book begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and continues the history until David's decrepitude, which did not occur until 43 years after the decease of Samuel. These books, therefore, are, in themselves, *conclusive* evidence that they were not written by that proud and brutal priest.

As to *Kings* and *Chronicles*—the four following books—they are acknowledged to be *anonymous*. I need not, therefore, notice them, only to remark, that they must have been composed after the Babylonish captivity, as the 2nd Book of Kings gives an account of that event. This proves them to be comparatively modern.

Ezra—This book may be genuine. Ezra probably wrote it at the time he *forged* other books of the Old Testament, under the peculiarly priestly presumption, that he was “inspired” to “re-write” them.

Nehemiah—The next book, could not be written by that holy personage; for in chap. xii., ver. 22, Jaddua, the priest, and Darius, the Persian king, are mentioned, who did not live until 100 years after Nehemiah was in his grave. Some one wrote this book who lived at least a century after Nehemiah's time.

Esther—The following book, is confessedly anonymous.

The remaining books of the Old Testament are not so much historical, as a compound of proverbs, songs, and prophecies.

Of the latter, I shall speak at length when I discuss the question of prophecy; of the former, I may soon dispose.

Job is evidently not a Jewish composition; it has no affinity with any other book in the Bible; it stands “alone in its glory.” This was the opinion of some of the most learned Jews. Eben Ezra and Spinoza have declared there is no evidence to prove that it is

a Jewish book. They maintain that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece *is not Hebrew*, and that some *Gentile* must be the author. Nevertheless, this is the only decent book in the Old Testament, with the exception of the Proverbs, of which I shall speak presently. St. Gregory, in the Preface to his Commentary on the Book of Job, after stating that its author is *unknown*, observes, "'Tis needless to inquire who composed the book of Job, since none of the *faithful* question that the *Holy Ghost was the author* of it." Now, if the authorship of Job is unknown, how could the "*faithful*" *know* that the Holy Ghost wrote it? If it be a *fact* that this strange writer was the "*inspired*" penman, the author *is* known—Holy Ghost!! Where did he live? Where did he come from? But we are growing "*blasphemus*." We must proceed with our subject.

The book of *Proverbs* is ascribed to Solomon. There is every reason, however, to induce the belief that those proverbs are nothing but a collection of sayings, taken from other nations, besides the Jewish, and Solomon's name added to give them authority.—This opinion is confirmed by the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, which asserts that, "these are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out." Now, Hezekiah did not live until 250 years after Solomon. How then could they certainly know, at that distance of time, with no press to transmit them, that they were Solomon's? What authority do they give for their genuineness? Absolutely none.

Psalms—These pious songs, in point of order, should have been noticed after Job. The mass of Bible-reading Christians ascribe them to David.—Hence, the general title in the Prayer Books, &c., "The Psalms of David." I wonder if David wrote the 137th Psalm, which refers to an event which did

not happen until 400 years after he was defunct! I mean the Babylonish captivity. "By the rivers of *Babylon* we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof, for there *they who carried us away* CAPTIVE, required of us a song, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." The more learned men admit that David composed only about a third of the Psalms. Some are ascribed to Moses and other godly penmen, no less than fifty being anonymous. It is an error or imposition, therefore, to speak of them as "the Psalms of David."

We will now briefly notice the books of the *New Testament*. First, of the *Gospels*. To disprove their genuineness, I must remind you, in the first place, of the important fact, as explained in my Second Discourse, that the *first* time these books were mentioned was in the year 182, some learned men say 192.—There is no conclusive or satisfactory evidence they were in existence before that date. *Not one* of the *apostolic* fathers allude to them, which they certainly would have done, had they been current. They refer to other gospels, but not in the most remote degree, do they allude to either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

If, therefore, these gospels were not extant earlier than the days of Ireneus, (182) it is morally impossible for them to have been composed by the four apostles just named, Ireneus not living until nearly a century after their time. The Christian father, Fauste, in his controversy with Augustine, about the year 400, distinctly affirms, that the gospels *are not genuine*. He observes, "The books called the evangelists have been composed *long after* the times of the apostles, by some obscure men, who, fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters, *of which they could not be informed*, have published them *under the name of the apostles*; and which are so full of *sottishness* and discordant relations that there is neither *agreement* nor *connexion* between them." He

further remarks, "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted in the Scriptures of our Lord many things, which, though they carry his *name*, agree not with his *doctrine*. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved* these things have not been written by himself, *nor by his apostles*, but, that for the greatest part, they are founded upon *tales*, upon *vague reports*, and put *together*, but I know not what, half Jews, with but little agreement between them, and which they have, nevertheless, *published under the name of the apostles of our Lord*, and have thus attributed to them *their own errors and lies!*" Very polite, certainly, for a Christian BISHOP! Those who wish to verify these important extracts may refer to Boulanger's Life of Paul, who states that he has taken them from the writings of Augustine against Fauste. Boulanger also makes another astounding statement in the 2nd chapter of his work. "The Manicheans, who formed a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity, rejected as false ALL THE BOOKS of the New Testament, and showed other writings quite different, which they gave as authentic."

M. Simon, the learned French theologian, in his "Critical History of the text of the New Testament," assures us, that, "We have no solid proof in antiquity to make it appear to us, that the names set at the head of every gospel were thereunto prefixed by those who are the authors of them."

Du Pin, the Christian historian, expresses a similar opinion, and asserts, confidently, that we have only the testimony of the Fathers for the genuineness of the gospels.

Those who heard my Third Address will know what weight to give to *their* testimony. M. Simon, himself, from whom I have just quoted, alluding to the Fathers at this time, says, "We ought not *too easily* to give credit to the first originals of churches, (the Fathers) *every one strives to advance their antiquity as much as possible*, and they make *no scruple*

on such occasions, *to COUNTERFEIT acts, when they have none that are true.*" To rest, therefore, your belief in the genuineness of the gospel, upon the veracity of such men, is truly preposterous.

Let me, however, give you *internal* proof that the gospels are not genuine, which is worth a volume of *external* evidence. Matthew, chap. xviii., ver. 17, says, "If he neglect to hear the *church*, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Now there was no church in the time of Jesus or Matthew. Church is a Greek word. The assembly of the people of Athens, styled itself *ecclesia*. This expression was only adopted by the Christians, *in process of time*, when they had obtained a kind of *government*. A book containing such a passage, could not have been written by Matthew.

Acts and the *Epistles*—Many of these writings have been repudiated as not genuine, by some one or other of the Christian sects. Eusebius, in his third book, informs us, that the epistles "which are gain-said, though well known to many, are, the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, the latter of Peter, and the Second and Third of John." He also mentions that the Acts of Paul, and several others, were rejected as spurious. Dr. Du Pin affirms that the Epistle to the Hebrews, "has no certain name as the real author." Boulanger, in his "Life of Paul," states, that the Marcionists, and other early Christian sects, rejected the Acts as forged, and that the sect called the Sevenians, adopted neither the Acts nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says, that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing *either of the author* or the book. The Echronites, indeed, who were the *first* Christians, rejected all the Epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an *impostor*—a very sensible opinion.

Revelations—The last book in the Bible, if we are to accredit many learned Christians, is like the rest

—a pious fraud. One of these learned Christians is no less a person than Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, who flourished in the third century. His testimony has been repeatedly cited by modern Christians; amongst whom is the Christian professor, Du Pin. The bishop broadly affirms that “Divers of our predecessors have wholly *refused* and *rejected* this book, and by discussing the several chapters thereof, have found it obscure, and void of reasons, *and the title forged!!!* Again, they said it was not John’s, nay, it was no revelation at all; which was covered with so gross a veil of ignorance, and that there was none, either of the apostles, or of the saints, or of them which belonged to the church, the author of this book, *but Corinthus*, the author of the Corinthian heresy, instituting this as a figment in the name of John, for further credit and authority.” We have *internal* evidence that this book could not have been written by John; for the writer refers to the *church of Laodicea*, and its sloth and corruptions, consequent upon its great riches and power. Now, this church was not established until the middle of the second century, nearly 100 years after the time of John. A very clever man John must have been truly, to have mentioned events which did not happen until upwards of a century after he had gone to “another and a better world!”

We have tested the genuineness of the respective books of the Old and New Testament, and in relation to the last—Revelations—the grand *finale* of the Bible, we are actually told by a Christian bishop, not only that it was not written by John, but is merely the composition of a *heretic*.

O! how long will the people support such imposture? Will they never outgrow the credulity of their ignorant and superstitious ancestors? Will they never aspire to mental manhood? Yes—rapidly are the masses disencumbering themselves from their intellectual trammels. The shackles of priestcraft al-

ready sit loosely around them. A few short years of dauntless and unremitting effort on the part of the friends of mental liberty, and the dismal temple of superstition and delusion will totter and fall, and on its ruins will be seen the glorious edifice of reason and enlightenment. The day will then really have arrived, when, as Shelley observes, "falsehood's trade will be as hateful and unprofitable, as that of truth is now."

LECTURE SEVENTH.

PROPHECY.

FRIENDS—

I SHALL address you this evening on the subject of Prophecy. In the estimation of many Christians, this is, indubitably, the most important, interesting, and triumphant evidence in favor of the divinity of the Bible. Others, however, and they include some of the most learned, consider that considerable doubt and difficulty surround the question. Among the latter class, are divines of no less renown than Bishop Watson, Belsham, and Bishop Sherlock.

Watson admits, that "no subject requires greater intellectual energy than the elucidation of prophecy. *It is a boisterous sea of controversy.*"—[Life of Watson, vol. iii., p. 385.

Belsham observes, in his Evidences, pages 76 and 112, "I find it *difficult* to satisfy myself, that I fully comprehend the true meaning and extent of the prophetic language. To understand it satisfactorily, it must be proved—First, that the Jews *were* favored with a revelation from God; Secondly, That their sacred books contain a series of prophecies, which received their *proper* accomplishment in the person and character of Jesus of Nazareth; and to the validity of this argument, there must be—First, sufficient evidence that the prophecy was delivered *prior* to the event. Secondly, That the event was beyond the

reach of *human* sagacity to foresee or calculate ; and, Thirdly, the clear and palpable fulfilment of the prophecy *in* the event."

In subsequent observations, I shall show, that the Scripture prophecies *do not* conform to the rules of the learned gentleman, and therefore, according to his argument, cannot be received.

Bishop Sherlock declares, in his Discourse, page 31, "that many of the latter prophecies are still *dark and obscure*, and so far from evidently belonging to Christ, and Christ only, that it requires much learning and sagacity to show, *even* now, the connection between some prophecies and the events."

These few extracts, from Christians of no mean celebrity, clearly evince the great difficulty the *priesthood* experience in attempting to establish the divinity of their Scriptures upon prophecy.

Hence we find that some of the most laborious and voluminous writings ever published, have been upon this vague and speculative topic. Dr. Keith has waded through an immense mass of useless learning and idle display, in order to prove the fulfilment of the prophecies. The Rev. Mr. Ketts, too, though he professes to have *compressed* his arguments, fills a volume of 816 pages, with a Dissertation upon the subject, and Bishop Newton has presented the world with a production of 1200 pages on the same question, and yet informs his readers that he has studied *brevity* !

I probably may be considered ungrateful, after the exercise of such patience and research, by so many learned men, when I say that I deem such works a complete waste of time and paper—a mass of religious rubbish.

Were the *whole* of the arguments they adduce, in these ponderous volumes, irrefragably demonstrated, I still maintain they have done *nothing* to *decide* the question at issue. Were we to concede all that these learned gentlemen require—were we to allow that

every one of the prophecies from Genesis to the Revelations were fulfilled *to the very letter*, I nevertheless aver they have done absolutely nothing to decide that the Bible is the word of God. This may be deemed a somewhat bold and unwarrantable assumption on my part, but I reiterate it.

My *reasons* for making an assertion so unqualified, are, *first*, because I hold that prophecy does not *necessarily* imply divine inspiration. Prophecies may be made, and may be fulfilled without divine interposition. See the prophecies of the oracles of Greece, particularly those of Diana and Delphos, the prophecies of Lactantius, St. Cesaire, Virgil, Seneca, Dr. Johnson, Napoleon, Lord Chesterfield, and the Cornish prophecies, recorded by Polewell, in his history of Cornwall, and Sir John Davis, in his Discoveries, page 77, the former being in relation to the destruction of Paul's Church, Penzance, and New Lynn, long before they were in existence; and the latter, relative to the subversion of Ireland. Secondly, prophecies are not *peculiar* to the Christian religion. They may be found in the "sacred" writings of other religions, and are as well attested as the Bible prophecies. The celebrated *Hindoo* prophecy, mentioned by Col. Wilkes, in his Hindoo sketches, a prophecy singularly fulfilled in the person of *Sevajee*, the conqueror and deliverer of that people, is a case in point. Therefore, if prophecy *necessarily* implies divine inspiration, *these* books are inspired; and hence there must be a multiplicity of "divine revelations"—"words of God"—an idea at once incongruous and absurd. The argument of prophecy leads to a *reductio ad absurdum*, and therefore cannot be considered *conclusive*.

What is a *Prophecy*? Dr. Johnson says that it is "prediction," and *to predict* is to "*foretell*." Now, I affirm that the power of foretelling or prognostication is in the possession of every human being, according to the capacity of his intellect, and the extent of his knowledge and experience. There is scarcely a day

passes but every individual prophecies more or less. I will appeal to your every day experience, whether you have not repeatedly affirmed that such and such circumstances will take place, and whether in *some* instances, *at least*, you have not found yourself correct?

So far as your prediction *was* verified, so far, according to the logic of the orthodox, were you inspired. Prophecy, therefore, under such circumstances, becomes an *ordinary* rather than *extraordinary* event—a *human* rather than a *super-human* attainment; and, consequently, not one by which you can legitimately determine the *divinity* of Scripture.

But I may be told that the “pious” mean only those predictions which extend to hundreds of years, and not to mere local and passing events. Granting this, it still does not improve their position, for precisely the same arguments will bear against *this* view of the subject as the other. I can cite cases, if it be necessary, where prophecies have been made by men who had *no pretensions* at all to divine inspiration, which have evidently related to events which happened *centuries* subsequent to the time of prediction, and which *did* happen. See the case of St. Cesaire, Bishop of Arles, page 542, given in a book, entitled, *Liber Mirabilis*, which has been verified at the King’s Library, at Paris, where there is an *original*. His prophecy is in relation to the French Revolution, and is quite as remarkable as any in the Bible. It is as follows:—“The administration of France shall, at a *future* and *distant* period, be so blinded that they shall leave it without defenders; the hand of God shall extend itself over them, and likewise over all the *rich*; all the *nobles* shall be deprived of their estates and dignities—*division* shall spring up in the *church* of God, and there shall be two husbands, the one true and the other adulterous—the former shall be put to flight. There shall be a *great carnage*, and as great an effusion of blood as in the time of the Gentiles.—

The universal church, and the *whole world shall deplore* the ruin of a *celebrated city*, the *capital* and the mistress of France. The *altars* of the temple shall be destroyed; the holy virgins razed out, shall fly from their convents, and the church shall be *stripped of her temporal goods*; but, at length, the *black eagle* and the lion shall appear, arriving from *other countries*. Then, misery be to thee, oppressed city of opulence! Thou shalt, at first, rejoice, but thy end shall come. Misery be to thee, O city of philosophy! Thou shalt be subjected — *a captive king, humbled even to the dust*, shall, at last, recover his crown, and shall destroy the city of impiety." Such is the extraordinary prophecy of St. Cesaire. Those acquainted with the history of the French Revolution, will perceive its applicability to that memorable event. The editor of the work, from which this prophecy is taken, shows its application to that catastrophe, in the following lucid manner: "The vassal, who looked not on the noble as his *natural* protector and guardian, but as an oppressor, arose against him, the soldier against the officer, the officer against the general, and the servant against his master. Chaos was again restored, the holy altars were overturned, the convents defiled and pillaged, nobles reduced to the rank of private citizens, to save even life itself. The humblest of citizens and menials arose to power and despotism—so *dreadfully* was this prophecy *fulfilled*. At length, even the black eagle, the ensign of the northern power, and the lion, that of Britain, gained possession of Paris, the self-dignified city of philosophy, stripped her of her ill-gotten spoil, and, as a punishment of her abuse of power over other States, caused again to reign over her a king, that may have been truly said to have been humbled *even to the dust*."

This prophecy is worth all the Bible-prophecies put together. Not one of them are fulfilled so literally.—And yet it is made by one who had no pretensions to divine inspiration; made too, more than 1200 years

before the circumstances referred to, occurred! Taking, then, the word prophecy, either in a limited or extended signification, the arguments of the orthodox, based upon that kind of evidence, are neutralized and invalidated.

Having shown that the testimony of prophecy is inadmissible in deciding the *divinity* of the Bible, we shall proceed to prove that, even granting that this evidence is conclusive, the Scripture prophecies are not of a nature to demonstrate that the book is divine. I have four distinct objections to these prophecies:—

1. That many of them were not written until *after* the events prophecied had occurred, which I conceive to be a very *good* objection.

2. Their vague and indefinite character, proving that they could not be given by inspiration from *omniscience*.

3. That those prophecies which are clear and distinct *have not been fulfilled*.

4. The *lying* character of the Bible prophets.

In reference to this last objection, ample evidence will be found in its support, in Hosea, chap. ix., verses 7, 8, where the prophet is denounced as a *fool* and a *snare*; Micah, chap. iii., verses 5 and 11, where it is said the prophets only divine for *money* and *deceive* the people; Lamentations of Jeremiah, chap. ii., v. 14, they told *vain and foolish things*; Isaiah, chap. ix., verses 15 and 28, verse 7, it is said they teach *lies* and are *drunken*. (This quite agrees with the Christian Dodwell's statement, that they prepared themselves to prophecy by *drinking wine*. They might well get *drunk*. They were indeed "*spiritualists*.") Zachariah, chap. xiii., verses 2 and 4, gives the *pleasing* intelligence that the "Lord" will *root them all out of the land, and make them ashamed* of themselves; 1 Kings, chap. xxii., verses 22, 23; Ezekiel, chap. xiv., v. 9; Jeremiah, chap. xx., v. 7, God himself is represented not only as *deceiving* the prophets, and causing them to *err*, but *instructing* them in the *art*

and *mystery* of *lying*! What confidence can be placed in such a gang of liars and impostors, who were always squabbling among themselves and accusing each other of lying and deceiving? They were like our modern quacks, who cry "Take *my* pills and beware of *counterfeits*."

With respect to the remaining three objections, they will be substantiated in the course of my remarks on the respective predictions. I shall, of course, only notice the more important. If these be invalidated, the minor fall with them.

The *dispersion of the Jews* is the first prophecy I shall notice. It is given in Deut. chap. xxviii. This prophecy the Christians affirm is the most remarkable on record. I can only say that had it been given so early as stated, it would have been worthy of notice. But such was not the fact. Moses did not write Deuteronomy. We have proved, in previous addresses, that the Pentateuch was not mentioned until after the Babylonian captivity, and that Ezra must have been the writer of these books. Now, Ezra flourished only *400 years before Christ, after* the Jews had been dismembered, and lived in slavery for years. It was no difficult task, therefore, at that time, to predict their dispersion. The wonder, in fact, would have been if it had been predicted that they would *not* have been dispersed. But even supposing Moses had been the writer, there is nothing in the prophecy so singularly remarkable—nothing beyond the grasp of human foresight. The Jews, from time immemorial, were exceedingly rebellious, cruel, insolent, and pragmatical; and Moses, therefore, might easily have anticipated that the first great nation which arose would attempt their subjection, in which they would easily succeed, the Jews, with all their audacity and brutality, being naturally cowards. It required no *divine inspiration* to foretell such events. As striking prognostications have been given in relation to other nations, by writers not presuming to miraculous agency, and which

have proved true. This prophecy, therefore, if fulfilled to the very letter, by no means establishes the divinity of Scripture.

Unfortunately, however, there are parts of this prediction, and they are the most explicit, which have not been fulfilled. In verse 64, it states that the Jews when scattered shall worship other gods, which neither they nor their fathers had known, "even wood and stone." But is such the case? Do they worship such gods now that they *are* scattered? On the contrary, is it not proverbial, that the Jews are the most tenacious of the religion of their forefathers of any people upon earth?

And, again, in verse 15, we are told that the Jews shall experience this misery and subjection for their disobedience of his (Moses's) ritual. Is such the real reason of their present dispersion? Confessedly not. It is owing to the power of the Egyptians in the first instance, then the Chaldeans, and thence down to the Romans. It was these causes, combined with their national character, that led to their present condition. Apart, however, from these considerations, this prophecy cannot be fulfilled until the Jews are restored.—We are told, chap. xxx., that the Lord "will gather them from all nations, whereunto he hath scattered them." *Has* he done so? *Are* the Jews restored? True, there has been an idle rumor abroad of late, that some parties were going to *purchase* Jerusalem, in which the Jews might assemble, and thus verify the prediction. But "don't they wish they may get it," as the somewhat vulgar adage has it? If they *do*, it only shows that prophecies are *marketable* commodities—things that may be bought and sold. Such prognostications depend for fulfilment, not upon their *spiritual*, but *money* value—not upon their "divine inspiration," but upon what they will *sell* for—no more.

In chap. xlix., v. 10, of Genesis, there is the following passage which has been twisted by our priests

into a prophecy of the *coming of Christ*:—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." It remains to be proved that the word Shiloh signifies Christ, and could apply to no one else. Besides, it is *not true* that the sceptre was wielded by the tribe of Judah at the time Jesus is said to have appeared, for long before that period the Jews had submitted to the Romans.—They had, also, before that, been in captivity to the Assyrians for seventy years, during which it cannot be pretended that a vestige of royalty remained in Judah, or in any other of the tribes. This prediction, therefore, cannot apply to Christ; or, if it does, the prophecy is an utter failure. Moreover, whether the prediction be true or false, it could not have been given by Jacob, as stated in this chapter, for *he* could not know that the Jews were *ever* ruled by a sceptre, as Saul, the first Jewish king, did not live until hundreds of years after Jacob.

We must now notice the famous passage in Isaiah, chap. vii., v. 14, another prophecy of the coming of Christ. It begins, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," &c. If this has any reference to the appearance of Christ, it is exceedingly strange that it should be so vague and indefinite in all the details.—It is utterly destitute of all the properties of perspicuous prediction—a fact which proves that it could have no relation to such an important event as the birth of the "Son of God." The only thing definite in this memorable prophecy is the *name* of the child to be born, which is *not Christ*. The name of the mother of the child is not stated, nor any of the circumstances said to be connected with the birth of "our Saviour."

Several more enlightened Christians are now abandoning this once pet prophecy as untenable. Michaelis, the learned Christian professor, says (p. 212,) he "cannot be persuaded that the famous prophecy in Isaiah, chap. vii., v. 14, has the least reference to the

Messiah." The Jews, themselves, who ought to understand the meaning of their own book, most solemnly deny that this prophecy refers to Jesus Christ.—“These prophecies,” say they, in “Israel vindicated,” 1823, “have repeatedly been shown by our Rabbis to have a different meaning from that given them by the Christians, which it is impossible for any one to mistake whose mind is not predisposed to shut out the light of truth.” They charge the Christians, in Sol. Bennett’s Reply, 1809, with having “changed, in the original, nouns, verbs, tenses and meanings!”

The real nature of this celebrated passage will be seen on reading the context. You will perceive that it has not the slightest reference to the coming of a Messiah some 700 years subsequent to the time of Isaiah, but only to mere *local* and *immediate* events. The plain meaning is simply this:—The King of Syria, and the King of Israel, (for, at this period, the Jews were divided under two kings) made war *jointly* against Ahaz, King of Judah, and marched their armies towards Jerusalem, the capital of Ahaz. The latter, with his people, were alarmed; and, according to verse 2, “Their hearts were moved, as trees of wood are moved with the wind.” At *this* moment the prophet Isaiah addressed himself to Ahaz, in the usual cant parlance, “The name of the Lord,” assuring him that these two kings should not succeed against him. To convince Ahaz that *this* should be the case, Isaiah requested him, as was the practice of the prophets at that period, to ask a sign. He declined, however, stating, as a reason, that he would not “tempt the Lord.” Isaiah then said, as given in verse 14, “Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bare a son,” and verse 16 states, “And before this child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest (meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel), shall be forsaken of both her kings; and it shall come to pass, that the Lord shall hiss

(why not whistle?) for the flies that are in the brooks of Egypt, and for the bees that are in the land of Syria." A pity but the "Lord" could have found something better to do! But the story continues, "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, viz., by them that is beyond the river, by the King of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard."

Here, then, was the sign, and the time limited for the performance of the prophecy; viz., before the child could distinguish the good from the evil. It was necessary for the prophet to see to the fulfilment of his prediction; and, accordingly, we are told, in the next chap., verses 2 and 3, that Isaiah got the prophetess with child, which, when born, was to be called (by command of the Lord, *of course*,) by the strange name of *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*. Thus was this absurd and obscene prediction verified.

The evangelist, Matthew, and the Christian priesthood after him, pretend to found the theory of what they call the *gospel*, upon this silly and indecent tale. They pretend to apply it to the birth of a person who lived 700 years subsequent to this period. Is not such gross perversion calculated to sicken every enlightened mind with Christianity?

It is only necessary to read Book 2, of Chronicles, chap. xxviii., where the rest of this story is given, to find the *imposition* which Isaiah practised upon poor Ahaz. Instead of these two kings falling, as he assured Ahaz they would, *Ahaz himself* was beaten, and his army destroyed.

To say that this prophecy refers to Christ, is as much as to assert, that Isaiah would tell Ahaz that these two kings should not prevail against him until a child was born, 700 years after he was in his "final resting-place."

The Jewish priesthood maintain, that the sign alluded to, in this passage, was only *the wife* of Isaiah, as the Hebrew word for virgin, *alma*, was applied, not unfrequently, to married women.

We shall now remark upon that favorite prophecy of the Christians, relative to the birth-place of Christ. It is said to have been made by the prophet, Micah, as recorded in chap. v., ver. 2, of the Book having his name. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The evangelist, Matthew, pretends to quote this passage in chap. i., though he quotes it in a very incorrect and bungling manner, and applies it to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. It is easy to be seen, however, by any one who will use his own intellect, and not pay other men for thinking for him, that this passage can have no reference to such a person as Jesus Christ; for it is stated in ver. 5, of the same chapter, that, "This man, (meaning he who was to be ruler in Israel,) shall be at peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise up against him, (that is, against the Assyrian,) seven shepherds and eight principal men." And in ver. 6, it states, "And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod, on the entrance thereof; thus shall he, (the person spoken of,) deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders." These passages evidently refer to a *military* chief, and cannot mean Christ. The circumstances of the times spoken of, and those in which Christ lived, are in *contradiction* to each other. Strange to say, it was the Romans, and not the Assyrians, (a very different people,) who were in the land of Judea, and "trod in their palaces," at the period Christ is said to have been born and died; and, so far from *he* driving *them* out, it was under *them* that he suffered *death*. *They* drove *him* out pretty effectually, and held possession of the land long afterwards. These facts, therefore, absolutely *falsify* the prophecy that it applies to Christ—

proves, that like the other prophecies of this book of absurdities—it is no prophecy at all.

We will briefly remark upon the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, in Isaiah, chap. xiii. Christians are particularly fond of this prediction. Dr. Keith devotes nearly 100 pages to this subject. We hold, notwithstanding the dogmatism of the Doctor, that this prognostication was not given until *after* the event *had* really occurred, or about the time; and, therefore, could be no prediction at all. I affirm this upon the fact that the Book of Isaiah, in which this prophecy is recorded, was not written until that period. We are taught by the Christian priesthood, to believe that the Book of Isaiah was composed some 739 years before Christ, while, in reality, it could not have been in existence until two centuries subsequent to that date, which will bring us to the period of Babylon's downfall. In the latter part of chap. xlv., and beginning of xlv., reference is made to Cyrus, allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem. This event did not take place until the year 536, B. C., about 170 years after Isaiah's death. I, therefore, deduce three circumstances from this fact. First, that the book called Isaiah, was not written by him. Secondly, that it could not have been written until nearly 200 years after his time. And, thirdly, being composed at that period, the prophecy of the demolition of the famous city in question, could not have been given until either during the catastrophe, or subsequent to it; and consequently, can be no prediction at all. How the Christian clergy can have the audacity to present such a passage as an evidence of divine inspiration, I know not, except that upon these points, *the points of religion*, they are destitute of all shame!

In reference to the prophecy of Daniel, chap. ix., ver. 24—27, about the seventy weeks, and its application to Christ—of which Christian priests have talked so exultingly—little need be said to show its untenability. Dr. Francis has set this question at rest. My time, I am sorry to say, will not admit of

my giving the Doctor's remarks, as they are very elaborate. I may simply observe, that it cannot apply to Jesus Christ; for, if from the going forth of the commandment in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus, until the coming of the Messiah, there were to be seven weeks, or forty-nine years, (the seventy weeks are supposed to mean seven years each,) how does this agree with what follows, ver. 26, "After threescore and two weeks, (or more than 400 years,) shall Messiah be cut off?" And, again—"He shall confirm the covenant with many *for a week*," ver. 27. Did, then, Jesus Christ live more than 400 years? Or, did he confirm any covenant with many for seven years?—Most certainly not. Christ's ministry did not continue longer than three-and-a-half years; or, according to some learned divines, not longer than a *twelve-month*; and his lifetime, altogether, only extended to thirty-three years. Dr. Francis shows that it is Judas Macabees, the deliverer of the Jews—and not of Christ, that the prophet speaks. Clement Alexandrinus, Calmet and other Christian writers flatly deny the application of the weeks of Daniel to Jesus. Those who maintain the affirmative, lose sight of the context, forget chronology, and evince to what a pitch of delusion their minds have arrived.

The favorite Christian prophecy is that given by Christ, in Matthew, chap. xxiv. He foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. There is nothing, we conceive, at all remarkable in this prediction. Any man, of ordinary foresight, might have anticipated such an event, taking into consideration the character of the Jews, and the position of surrounding nations. Rome was then the mistress of the world. She had deluged Europe with blood—darkened it with desolation—and was still disposed to crush every empire that might deny her supremacy. Knowing this, and being aware of the insolent and rebellious character of the Jews, it was quite natural that Christ, or any other person might have predicted the demolition of Jerusalem. It would have been a miracle *had it not* been destroyed.

What was the fact? The Jews rebelled against the Roman authority; the consequence being, their city was destroyed, and they were scattered. Is there anything extraordinary in this? Is there anything requiring *divine* inspiration to foresee? Evidently not. But what proof have we that this prophecy was given *before* the event? I challenge the Christians to produce it. We know that Matthew, in which this prediction is recorded, as well as the other gospels, were not mentioned as having existence earlier than the year 182, or, as some divines held, 192, A. D., as shown at length in my second and last address. This would be more than a *century* after the destruction of Jerusalem, that event occurring A. D., 70. How modest to state that a prophecy is given in a book which was not known till more than 100 years after the event predicted had actually happened! How easy to manufacture a good prophecy under such circumstances! I may be told, Matthew is *supposed* to have been written A. D., 64. Yes—*supposed*, and a very *necessary* supposition, I should think, for the *safety* of the prophecy. But is mere *conjecture* to be taken as *proof*? Of course, when it suits the interests of priests. However, we will *suppose* as they desire in this instance—and what then? Why, it brings the book to have been written only six years before the event prophesied took place! What *wonderful* sagacity—what a large dose of inspiration it would require to foresee such an event at such an *immense* distance of time! What a pity the priests had supposed the date of its composition to be a *little* earlier! but even *they* had not the impudence even to *suppose* such as thing.

But whether this prophecy was given before or after the event, it was not fulfilled; and, therefore, can be no evidence in favor of the divinity of the Bible. We must take into account the *whole* of the prophecy, and we shall discover it is a most miserable *failure*. In verses 29, 30, and 34, it states, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days (that is, the destruction of Jerusalem), shall the sun be darkened, and the

moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the *powers* of the heavens shall be shaken; and then there shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels with a great sound of the trumpet; and they shall gather together the *elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. *Verily, I say unto you, THIS generation shall not pass away till ALL these THINGS are fulfilled.*" Here is a prophecy so clear and distinct that there is no mistaking its meaning. *But was it fulfilled? Is the world destroyed?* Your presence here this moment is a living denial. Not only has *THAT* generation "passed away," but *many*, and still the world is not at an end. The sun has not been darkened, nor has the moon ceased to give her light, and the stars still shine in brilliant splendor, as if in mockery of such a monstrous prediction. They still ride in triumph through the fields of space, spreading light and warmth to an admiring world. O! Christians, where is your modesty—your honesty in declaring such passages as a divine prognostication, when every moment of your lives belies the prediction? O! when will you blush at your unparalleled impudence? But what say you of the Second Advent? Did Christ appear again immediately after the siege of Jerusalem, as predicted in this prophecy? Was he seen "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?" gathering together "the elect" from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other?—No! He never appeared. No such phenomena were exhibited. And yet "*all these things*" were to happen before *that* generation had passed away! How monstrous to affirm such a prediction to be fulfilled! None but priests or their dupes could commit such an audacious outrage upon experience and common sense.

One more prophecy, and I have done. In Mark, chap. xvi., Christ is represented as saying, "Go ye

unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned.— And these signs shall follow them that believe : in my name they shall cast out devils, (a very respectable trade, truly !) they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.”

Do such things attend those who believe in Christ ? Can Christians cast out devils ? If they could, there would be less need of the parsons. Can they take poison with impunity ? *Doctors*, I have no doubt, would then be at a discount. Can they play with serpents with impunity ? Can they lay their hands on the sick and they will recover ? Can they do any of these things ? It is a mockery to ask the question. Here, then, is the plainest prophecy in the whole of the Bible, and given by *Christ* himself, proved to be an absolute, unqualified, downright failure !

To expose more of these prophecies in one discourse, would be impossible ; and, if possible, would be unnecessary. The rest are more or less dependent upon these, and must stand or fall with them. They display the most impudent perversion of language and sense, and amusingly exhibit the marvellous ability of our theologians in prophecy-making. To show their inveterate propensity to prediction-mongering, I need but mention, that John Hawkins, Esq. proves that Britain is the kingdom which Daniel declares God will set up ! Captain John Maitland illustrates the prophecies of Daniel by Revelations ! J. H. Frere, Esq. proves that Daniel, Esdras, and St. John, have been accomplished in the life of Bonaparte ; and the ex-King of Sweden pronounces Bonaparte to be the beast in Revelations ! Dr. Whiston, a celebrated professor, of Cambridge, considered that Mary Tofts having, according to popular belief, brought forth rabbits, was an accomplishment of a prophecy in Esdras !

Mr. Faber engages in wholesale discoveries of this kind, while his friend, Mr. Burt, helps him in the retail trade, saying, "that appearances give considerable weight to Dr. Faber's supposition of the battle of Armageddon, in the holy land; and thus an Irish legislator, (when deranged,) insisted that Armageddon meant Armagh, because, in the Apocalyptic version, something is incidentally said of *fine linen*!"

I shall conclude this discourse, by a brief quotation from a man who has done most in uprooting the iniquitous dominion of priestcraft and superstition.—Thomas Paine, that immortal writer, shrewdly observes: "According to the modern meaning of the word prophecy, and prophesying, it *signifies* foretelling events to a great distance of time, and it became necessary to the inventors of the gospel, to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply, or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament to those of the New. But, according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophet, so far as the word seer was incorporated into that of the prophet, had reference only to the things then passing, or very closely connected with it, such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of an enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in, all of which had *immediate reference to themselves*, (as in the case already mentioned, of Ahaz and Isaiah, with respect to the expression, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' &c.,) and not to any *distant future time*. It was that kind of prophesying, that corresponds to what we call *fortune-telling*; such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, &c., and it is the priest of the CHRISTIAN church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and superstition of *modern*, not that of *ancient* times, that elevated these poetical, musical, conjuring, dreaming, strolling gentry, into the rank they have since held."

LECTURE EIGHTH.

MIRACLES.

FRIENDS—

THE subject upon which I propose to address you this evening, is *Miracles*. The mass of Christians, especially the ignorant and credulous, attach supreme importance to this testimony, while a few of the more advanced are disposed to rest their faith entirely upon other evidence. In this class, we find Bishop Newton, Foster, Desvæux, Cardinal de Retz, Dr. Middleton, and Bishop Fleetwood. These gentlemen recommend Christians to "*reject* miracles, — nay, 10,000 miracles, let them be ever so well attested, if they sanction any doctrine contrary to truth, reason and morality." "For, otherwise," says Mr. Desvæux, in his *Treatise on Miracles*, "we should never have done examining miracles." The Cardinal de Retz remarks, when rejecting a celebrated Catholic miracle, "it was not necessary, in order to reject a fact of this kind, to be able *accurately* to *disprove* the testimony, and to trace its falsehood through all the circumstances of knavery and credulity which produced it. He knew that this was commonly altogether impossible at any small distance of time and place, so it was extremely difficult, even were one present on the spot, on account of the bigotry, ignorance, cunning, and roguery of a great part of mankind." He, therefore, concluded that such evidence carried falsehood on the

very face of it, and that a miracle, supported by any *human* testimony, was more properly a subject of derision than argument." In this sentiment I most cordially concur, my decided opinion being, that the evidence of miracles is utterly incompetent to decide the question. The same distinguished writer, when referring to the credulity of the ignorant, very admirably remarks, "Nothing convinces multitudes so much, as that which they *cannot comprehend*."

The Christian father, St. Chrysostom, positively declares, that "miracles are proper only to excite sluggish and vulgar minds; that men of sense have no occasion for them; and that they frequently carry some outward suspicion along with them." The great Mosheim, in his Eccles. History, speaking of the early ages of Christianity, and the miracles pretended to be wrought in those days, observes, "The simplicity and ignorance of the generality in those times, furnished the most favorable occasions for the exercise of fraud; and the impudence of impostors in contriving false miracles, was artfully proportioned to the credulity of the vulgar; whilst the sagacity of the wise, who perceived these cheats, were overawed into silence by the dangers that threatened their lives and fortunes, if they should expose the artifice." Thus, does it generally happen in human life, that when danger attends the discovery of truth, and the profession thereof, the prudent are silent; the multitude believe, and impostors triumph. The ingenious and learned Christian, Dr. Middleton, in his famous "Free Inquiry," when quoting the authority of St. Cyprian, as to the frauds of the Christians in the third century, observes, as follows:—"From all these considerations taken together, it must, I think, be allowed that the forged miracles of the fourth century, give us just reason to suspect the pretensions of every other age, both before and after it." This is a most important admission for a Christian Doctor.

„ Miracles, I hold, if true—if possible, not only con-

clusively disprove the divinity of the Bible, but *divinity itself*; and therefore, the Christians, in adducing this kind of evidence, so far from establishing their position, most signally and incontrovertibly invalidate it. This may appear a somewhat strange averment, but it is one by no means difficult of elucidation.—They declare that the Deity is *infinite* in all his perfections, and that the laws of nature are an *effect* of these divine and infinite attributes, and must, therefore, have been arranged, *at the first*, in the *best possible manner*, and for *the best possible purposes*. Now, to *alter* these laws, so *absolutely perfect*, (as the performance of a miracle necessarily implies,) would be to make these laws *imperfect*, as no alteration could take place in that which was *as perfect as it could be*, unless for the *worse*. To work a miracle, therefore, could answer no really *good purpose*, and must, in its nature, be derogatory to the powers of the God by whom it is supposed to be performed.

To establish a system of religion by evidence drawn from miracles, is to establish it upon the ruin of the consistent harmony of the divine attributes by annihilating his perfection, divesting him of that which could alone constitute him a God—either the Deity did things at the first as they ought to be done, or he did not. If he did them as they ought to be done, there could be no need of alteration, and, consequently, *there could have been no such thing as a miracle*; but if he did *not*, then he must have been either *imperfect* or have acted *inconsistently* with good principle; in either of which cases his character *as God* would be destroyed. It is manifest, that a *wonder-working* God, who violates his own laws, and acts inconsistently with the principles which *he himself* has established, is no God at all, but a puerile, vacillating creature, possessing all the weaknesses of an ignorant humanity, and none of the perfections of an omniscient Divinity.

“To suppose that God can alter the settled laws of

nature which he himself had formed (which he *must* do to perform a miracle,) is to suppose," says Palmer, "his will and wisdom *mutable*, and that they are not the *best* laws of the most perfect being; for if *he* is the author of them, they must be as immutable as *he* is, so that he *cannot* alter them to make them better, and *will not* alter them to make them worse. Neither of those can be agreeable to his attributes. If the course of nature is not the best, the *only* best and fittest that could be, it is not the offspring of *perfect* wisdom, nor was it settled by *divine* will; and if so, God is not the author of nature, if the *laws* thereof can be altered, for if the laws of nature are *God's* laws, he cannot alter them in any degree, without being *in some measure changeable*. If all nature is under the direction of an *immutable* mind, what can make a *change* in that direction?"

God must be allowed to be eternal; therefore, he necessarily exists, and is, necessarily, whatever he is; therefore, it is not in his own power to change himself—it is his perfection to be immutable. For if his nature could possibly change, it might err, for whosoever is changeable is not perfect.

Besides, an eternal and perfect nature must *necessarily* be unchangeable; and so long as the first moving cause is the same, all subsequent and secondary causes can never vary."

Voltaire observes, "For what purpose would God perform a miracle?" To accomplish some particular design upon living beings. He would then, in reality, be supposed to say,—I have not been able to effect by my construction of the universe—by my divine decrees—by my eternal laws, a particular object; I am now going to change my *eternal* ideas, and *immutable* laws, to endeavor to accomplish what I have not been able to do by *means* of them.

"This would be an avowal of his *weakness*, not of his *power*; it would appear, indeed, in such a being an *inconceivable contradiction*."

From this reasoning, the validity of which cannot be controverted, it is obvious the orthodox in maintaining that miracles are an evidence of the divinity of their book, are only exploding their own pretensions. The argument of miracles is indeed suicidal. I repeat, therefore, miracles are not admissible as proof of the point at issue.

Conceding, however, for the sake of argument, that miracles are a proof of divine interposition, the orthodox are by no means relieved from their embarrassments—they are only involved in still more distressing difficulties, as the founders of all the great religions in the world, and their more immediate apostles, are said, by their disciples, to have performed miracles, many of which are of an infinitely more wonderful character than any recorded either in the Old or New Testament; and upon authority equally as satisfactory.

If miracles are a proof of the divinity of one religion, they are of another, and, hence, the heathen religions are just as likely to be genuine as the Christian; nay, *more so*, because their miracles are much more extraordinary. The value of a miracle is to be estimated not by its probability, but improbability.—The more improbable, therefore, a miracle may be, the better miracle it is, and the more likely the religion for the advancement of which it was performed, is divine. Of course, a more astounding miracle would require the administration of a stronger dose of divine inspiration; and, therefore, if I can show that the miracles of the heathen are more remarkable than those of the Christian,—I prove that they are *more divine*—more worthy the acceptance of miracle-mongers and miracle-believers.

Permit me to adduce, in the first place, a few Hindoo miracles. I shall quote from a very pious French Christian Missionary, Abbe Dubois, who lived among the Hindoos for many years, and had every opportunity of becoming acquainted with their opinions, hab-

its, and superstitions. He remarks, "The miracles of the Christian religion, however extraordinary they must appear to a common understanding, are by no means so to the Hindoos. Upon them they have no effect. The exploits of Joshua and his army, and the prodigies they effected by the interpositions of God, in the conquest of the land of Canaan, seem to them *unworthy of notice*, when compared with the achievements of their own Kama, and of the miracles which attended his progress when he subjected Ceylon to his yoke. The mighty strength of Samson dwindles into nothing when opposed to the overwhelming energy of Bali, of Ravana, and the giants. The resurrection of Lazarus itself, is, in their eyes, an *ordinary* event, of which they see *frequent* examples in the Vishnu ceremonies of Pahvahdam. I particularize these examples because they have been actually opposed to me more than once by Brahmins in my disputations with them on religion."

From this extract it is evident that the Christian miracle-dealers must "hide their diminished heads," and never more attempt to Christianize *that* portion of the globe until they can manufacture a superior stock of "divine wonders."

We will now mention the famous *Grecian* miracle, said to have been performed by the priests of Apollo, before the temple of Delphos.

Bishop Warburton, alluding to this memorable phenomenon, remarks, "The prediction of this desolation, by the priests of Apollo, with the faith due to the best human testimony, which strangely concurred to support the fact, were, I presume, the reasons which inclined the excellent Dean Prideaux, to esteem it *miraculous*." He says, "Brennus went on with his army towards Delphos, to plunder the temple; but he there met with a *wonderful defeat*—a terrible storm of thunder, lightning, and hail, destroyed great numbers of his men; and, at the same time, an *earthquake*, rending the mountains asunder, threw down whole rocks upon them."

Here is a heathen miracle admitted to be such by Dean Prideaux. Bishop Warburton himself confesses that the testimony in favor of it, "strangely concurred to support the fact." The miracles of Mahomet are the most remarkable. They are worthy of the name. We are solemnly assured by Mahomedans that their prophet travelled through *ninety heavens in one night*, returning to Mecca before the next morning. This surpasses the railway or any other species of "locomotion." While in the celestial regions, we are told Mahomet saw God Almighty himself, and held with him a friendly personal conversation. He saw many other marvellous phenomena. For instance, in the first heaven he saw a cock, whose head was so large that it reached to the *second* heaven, which was at the distance of 500 days' journey, according to the common rule of travelling on earth.

In another "heaven" he beheld an angel so large that the distance between his eyes was equal to the length of *seventy thousand days' journey !!!*

In one of the heavenly apartments, he beheld a *cherub* with *seventy thousand heads*, and every head had *seventy thousand mouths*, and in every mouth there were *seventy thousand voices*, with which the angel was *incessantly* praising.

These are *really* "miraculous wonders," and, if we are to accredit miracles, that of Mahomet's visit to heaven, is something *worthy* of our credulity. Did time permit, I could amuse you with the details of an immense number of other miracles, from various parties and religions, most of which are much more satisfactorily attested than any of the Bible-wonders, and which, therefore, we have as much right to believe.

I could tell you of the Egyptian miracles. I could tell you of the miracles wrought by the sorcerers of Pharaoh, and the priests of Baal, as declared in the Bible itself—by men who did not teach the "true religion." I could tell, too, of the miracles of Appolo-

nus—the Roman miracle, as recorded by Livy, the celebrated historian—of the miracles of Vespasian, who, we are told, cured a blind man, and gave another the use of his arm; and who, in consequence, was honored by many as a god.

I could tell you of the miracles said to have been performed by the kings of England and Scotland, so lately as the 12th century, when they professed to cure the *scrofula* by the sign of the cross. I could tell you of the thousand and one miracles said to have been performed by the *holy fathers* during the dark ages—of the “miraculous performances” recorded in the Methodist magazines, and other superstitious publications—miracles, many of which, says Wesley himself, in his letter to the Bishop of Gloucester, are beyond all suspicion, as the “witnesses could not be deceived themselves, or deceive others.”

I could tell you, also, of the miracles of Prince Hohenlohe, who is said to have cured thousands who were afflicted with the most desperate diseases, by simply praying for them. The miracle of the withered elm-tree, mentioned by the Rev. Mr. Forsyth, and said to have been attested by many most respectable “eye-witnesses.”

Likewise, I could inform you of the celebrated miracle performed upon the inhabitants of New England, (America,) when afflicted by demons, spectres, and other supernatural agencies, narrated by Dr. Cotton Mather, who declares the phenomena he there records can be attested by the “oaths of a multitude of respectable witnesses.” I could tell you of these, and other pious wonders, but shall be constrained to content myself with the two following:—The first is the memorable miracle said to have been performed during the Italian war, in 1797. The French being supposed to have entered Italy to overthrow Papal Christianity, we are informed that numerous pictures of the Virgin Mary opened and shut their eyes in different parts of that country, during an interval of six

or seven months, and this was attested "by at least 60,000 persons, who voluntarily deposed that they repeatedly beheld the prodigy with their own eyes."

The Rev. editor of the "Official Memoirs," declares that these miracles have more "moral certainty in their favor than any 'fact' whatever in the annals of the world." We are seriously told that no less than 600,000 people actually saw paintings of the semi-goddess, Virgin Mary—pieces of mere inanimate matter, oil, paint, and canvass—open and shut their "eyes," continually, during the space of six or seven months! O! man, how far will thy credulity lead thee? This beats any miracle in the Bible, and is incomparably better attested—yet who believes it?

The miracles of William Huntingdon, are the cream of the whole. They are, what I should denominate, practical miracles—miracles founded, I should presume, upon the doctrine of utility.

We are told that when he prayed for leather breeches, he had them; and when he was hungry, fishes came out of the water, and larks from heaven, to feed him, in abundance. What a pity we cannot have such miracles now-a-days! How unfortunate that the impoverished portion of the community—those who are now reduced to insult and starvation, cannot receive a sufficient quantum of "divine grace" to work such miraculous performances!

There would be no necessity for "the Queen's begging letters," "relief committees," "benevolent societies," "poor-houses," or "charity" sermons.

But let us pause for a moment, to inquire what inference is to be deduced from these "facts." What but this—that miracles have been said to be wrought and attested in favor of all the great religions and sections of religions in the world, and that each of these parties declare that their respective miracles prove their respective tenets to be divine? Inasmuch, however, as this is impossible—inasmuch, as Bishop Fleetwood says, "miracles are no conclusive proof of any religion being true."

The argument of miracles, like that of prophecy, proves too much for the convenience of the Christian.

It affords the supporters of other religions an opportunity of proving, upon the same ground, that their religion is divine. The Christian public, therefore, must abandon the argument of miracles, or neutralize their own position, either of which will establish the point for which I am contending—at least so far as this argument is concerned.

Moore, in his “Veiled Prophet,” when alluding to the anxiety displayed by all impostors to establish their religion by miracles, exclaims—

“Ye, too, believers of incredible creeds,
Whose faith enshrines the monster which it breeds,
Who, bolder e’en than Nimrod, think to rise
By nonsense heaped on nonsense to the skies;
Ye shall have miracles, aye, *sound ones too*,
Seen, heard, attested, everything *but true*.”

It is alleged, however, that the prodigies recorded in the Bible, are better attested than any other miracles. The evidence is more conclusive—so conclusive that no rational mind can reject it. I ask, where is this evidence? I repeat, where is this evidence?

Do we find it in the *Old Testament*? The only evidence in favor of these miracles, is, that they are recorded in a book, composed by the priests of the most ignorant and credulous people in the world.

What sensible man will accept such testimony?—Are we to believe that the evidence in support of the wonderful repast of the angels with Abraham, the marvellous tale of Jonah’s three days’ residence in the whale’s belly—the sudden conversion of Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt—the raining of fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah—the passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea—the Herculean achievements of Samson—the stopping of the sun by Joshua, and a multitude of other monstrous fables—is better attested than the numerous Indian, Chinese, Grecian, and Popish miracles, when many of the latter are con-

firmed by the solemn attestation of magistrates, divines, physicians, and other respectable persons? and, if we reject these miracles, though confirmed by such evidence, why should we receive the Jewish miracles, which have not a particle of evidence in their favor? I defy both Jews and Christians to cite any collateral testimony. No writer or historian, however ancient, makes allusion to the extraordinary occurrences narrated in the Jewish "Book of Wonders," some of which, had they really happened, could not have escaped the notice of mankind. These stories are only mentioned in a book which was not heard of until about 300 years before Christ!—a book belonging to a race of priests, notorious for their impostures, their credulity, and their ignorance. The enlightened and thinking minds of the nineteenth century, are really called upon to acknowledge the stupid fables of such a heard of impostors, who only invented these "pious frauds" to excite the fear and wonder of a people, barbarous, superstitious, and illiterate! In the absence of all collateral testimony, I deem it unnecessary to pursue the subject.

What of the *New Testament* miracles? Is the evidence more satisfactory? Not at all. The Christians, of course, affirm that it is clear and incontrovertible; but mere assumption is not argument. It generally happens, when there is less proof, that the asserter of a proposition is more dogmatic. So it is in this instance. With all the exultation of the Christians, it is incontestable that the evidence in support of their divine prodigies is entirely *ex-parte*. I challenge them to name any contemporary authority, confirming their statements. Not one of the numerous writers and historians of those times can be quoted in support of their pretensions. Seneca, and the elder Pliny, the great natural philosophers of that age, do not refer, in the most remote degree, to the preternatural darkness—the rising of the saints from their graves, and their walking through the streets of Jerusalem, men-

tioned in Matt. xxvii., or any of the wonders said to have been performed before thousands of spectators. Pliny devotes a *whole* chapter to extraordinary eclipses, but notices not this astonishing phenomenon, which, had it occurred, must have been known to him.

It is to the Christian converts alone we are indebted for the only accounts we have of such amazing prodigies, and their isolated and unsupported testimony cannot be admitted as sufficient to establish their own veracity. Were this to be allowed them, on the same ground must we admit the miracles of the heathen lawgivers and founders of sects, as they were credited by millions of followers, and are so to this day.

The only collateral evidence which Christians themselves have ventured to adduce, is that of Josephus, Pontius Pilate, and Publius Lentulus, and this evidence we proved, on a former occasion, on the authority of Dr. Lardner, Dr. Du Pin, Bishop Warburton, and other distinguished *Christians*, was FORGED.

We know that at the time these miracles are said to have been accomplished, the people were *predisposed* to accredit them. All classes and nations, except a few philosophers, were believers in supernatural events. The Christian author Le Moine, in his *Essay on Miracles*, is obliged to admit that there "never was a greater corruption, more fraud in point of miracles, and a more general propensity to tamper with, or believe anything of the kind, than in the period which elapsed from the death of Christ to the destruction of Jerusalem." The credulity of the early Christians was unbounded; so much so indeed, that the Christian professor, Mosheim, who is esteemed by the pious as the *beau ideal* of an ecclesiastical historian, denounces them in his *Eccles. Hist.* v. i. p. 102, as "a gross and ignorant multitude."

Yet, it is upon the veracity of such a multitude, we have to rely for the credibility of the New Testament miracles!

The pretensions of Christ to supernatural powers were similar to those of Minos, Lycurgus, Pythagoras, and other lawgivers. They considered it *necessary*, in order to secure obedience to their laws, and inspire veneration, *to deceive the vulgar*. This maxim was adopted, too, by the Egyptians, the Jews, and the early fathers of the Christian church.

Indeed, *Christ himself*, as shown in our third lecture, positively *advocated* that doctrine.

He professed to teach, "That seeing they may see, and *not perceive*, and hearing they may hear, and *not understand*." (Mark iv. 12.)

We must reiterate that it is a fact as singular as it is fatal to the credibility of these miracles, that not one of them is confirmed by contemporary historians, not even such momentous events as the slaughter of the children by Herod—the opening of the heavens at the baptism of Jesus—the beheading of John the Baptist, after he had baptized all Judea and Jerusalem—the purchase of the field of blood, which, it is said, was known to *all* the people of Jerusalem—the total darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus previously alluded to—and the wonderful pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, wherein an angel came to heal the sick.

In fact, most of the miracles of Christ, are said to have been done in comparative secrecy. His own resurrection is admitted by Christians to be only a "private miracle." I should say very private, for no one ever saw him rise from the tomb, not even his own disciples.

We have not the testimony of a *single individual* upon this strange event, and why a matter of so much importance was accomplished in so obscure a place, and not before as many witnesses as were present at his death, is sufficient to prove that those things are related by men, who, instead of being inspired by wisdom, seem to be remarkable only for ignorance and superstition.

With respect to the ascension, it appears that Mark

and Luke, who were not disciples at the time, and consequently, not present, are the only writers who pretend to give an account of the circumstance, and this, too, in a very contradictory manner; while Matthew and John, who are said to have been present, do not make the slightest allusion to it, nor inform us that it ever occurred! The declaration that Jesus would rise from the dead, after three days, was made in public: why, then, was the pretended performance made in private? The declaration was made before persons who required their doubts to be removed;—why, then, did he only appear before women and his disciples, who were ready to believe or to assert anything tending to the credit of their sect? The best evidence of which the nature of the case would admit, was his public appearance in Jerusalem;—why did not this take place? There is but one answer to be given—the whole story is an imposture, devoid of all truth or probability.

When Christ was “transfigured,” he takes with him *only* his *three favorites*! When he *turns water into wine*, he selects the time when his witnesses were “*merry*!” When he *raises the daughter of Jairus*, he puts away all *her* friends from witnessing the resuscitating process. When he *cures the blind man*, he takes him aside from *public observation*. When he cleanses the leper, he “straightly charged him, *see thou say nothing to any man*, but show thyself to the PRIEST!” (Mark i., 44;) an expression which indicates Christ’s wish to conceal his trick from the people—a practice always observed by impostors. Even the very corner stone of the divinity of Christ, his “miraculous conception,” rests entirely upon the assertion of Mary, who declares that she had been told by an “angel,” that she was with child by a ghost!—a “holy ghost,” and of Joseph, who, also affirms that an “angel” had told him so in a DREAM! A queer dream, truly—perhaps a mesmeric trance! How laughable, that the whole ground-work of the divi-

nity of Christianity depends upon a dream—a thing, upon which all intelligent persons, in any other case, place no reliance! Sensible people, even amongst Christians, in this age, esteem a person as imbecile who regards dreams, and yet the whole of the Christian world place such faith in them, as actually to found their religious belief upon them! What glorious consistency and rationality!! I am quite persuaded had Joseph and Mary lived in our day, and produced such evidence before any court in Europe, the sitting magistrate would have ordered them, in pure commiseration, to have been “taken care of.” In legal parlance, they would have been pronounced *non compos mentis*.

My friends, it is worthy of observation, that amongst the numerous inventions of priests to dupe mankind, one of the clearest was the miraculous conceptions and births of antiquity. They have been found extremely useful to priests in all ages, particularly when celibacy was the order of the day among them, and vestals were kept in the temples. These fables, palmed upon the ignorant, were convenient means of concealing all sacerdotal seductions and amours, by means of which “Sons of God” were “begotten.” When the fruits of these holy indulgencies could no longer be concealed, there was always at hand some good natured, accommodating god, willing to take upon himself the “fraternity;” the lady, of course, remaining in spotless virginity. The institution of the virgin votaries of Vesta, could not have been entirely unconnected with the private devotions of the priests, since these ladies were allowed to retire from the temples at the age of thirty. By such divine tricks the Hindo virgin, Rohini, conceived and brought forth a “Son of God,” one of the Brahmin Trinity. The Chinese had a virgin impregnated with the ray of the sun—the mother of the God, Foe. The mother of So-monocodum, who, according to the Scriptures of the Talapians of Siam, was the God expected to save the

universe, was likewise a "virgin." The followers of Leatze declare that his mother became pregnant by a junction of heaven and earth, and was pregnant with him for eighty years ! The followers of Plato, even two hundred and fifty years after his death, and only 100 before Christ, said that he was born of a "virgin." His father, Aristo, on his marriage, was warned in a dream, by Apollo, not to have commerce with his wife, because she was with child by him, (Apollo.) Aristo, like Joseph, obeyed, and Plato was added to the "Sons of God." Such are the delusions of imposture and superstition ! The story of Christ's conception, is equally as preposterous as that of Plato's. If you believe one, you may believe the other.

It is a very *suspicious* fact, my friends, that Christ's *own family and relations—those who knew him most intimately, longest, and best*, gave *no credit* to his pretensions to miraculous power, as seen in Mark vi., ver. 1, 2, 5 ; and John iv., ver. 44. It is a curious fact, too, that he refused to work his miracles *before men of sense and intelligence*, always preferring, when he did come before the public, to perform them in *the presence of the ignorant and credulous multitude*.

But there appears to have been a singular contrariety of opinions among the early Christians, in respect to many matters involving the miraculous character of Christ. His own Jewish converts regarded him as *a mere man*, while some of his heathen followers, according to the Rev. Mr. Jones, "Canen," p. 12, believed him to be "a certain power, sixty-six miles high, and twenty-four broad—so tall, *that his head reached the clouds !*" Another very prevalent opinion at this primitive period, says Moheim, vol. 1, p. 136, was, that Christ had existed only in *appearance*, and not in reality. Dr. Priestley states, in his Church History, vol. 1, p. 97, that this was the opinion of "all persons who pretended to philosophy, or more knowledge than the vulgar,

and continued down to the period of the establishment of Popery." The Christian apostle Barnabas, in his gospel, translated by Archbishop Wake, in his "Apostolic Fathers," expressly asserts that Jesus was *not* crucified, but that *Judas* was crucified in his stead. Bassillides, another primitive teacher of Christianity, declares that it was *neither Christ nor Judas* who was crucified, but *Symon of Sirene*! The Ebonites, says Dr. Hug, in his Introduction to the New Testament, (a numerous body of early Christians) "denied the miraculous conception of Christ, and with the *Nazarenes*, looked upon him *only as an ordinary man*." They also *denied* that he suffered *on the cross*, and asserted that he had *flown away to heaven!!* an achievement certainly more worthy of a "God," than that of allowing himself to be murdered between two felons.

Before I retire, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting some passages from the celebrated discourses of Woolston, on miracles. Those who would wish to be amused for a few hours, would do well to read these admirable predilections.

Alluding to the story of Christ telling the woman of Samaria that she had five hundreds, &c., he remarks:—"Christ here makes himself a wandering gipsy, or Bohemian fortune-teller, and I much wonder that our gipsies don't account themselves the *genuine* disciples of Jesus, being endowed with the like gifts, and exercising no worse arts than he himself practised." He compares Jesus when tempted by the devil, to St. Dunstan, who seized the devil by the nose, and he gives the preference to the Saint, for instead of parleying with him, he remarks, "If Jesus had taken him by the collar, and thrust him into his dungeon, and there chained him, and closed hell's gates upon him, I appeal to honest Christians whether such a Herculean labor would not have pleased them WELL?"

In the story of the fig-tree, he remarks, "Jesus

conducted himself like a mendicant friar on that occasion, who, before he turned field-preacher, was no better than a journeyman carpenter." "It is," says he, "very surprising that the court of Rome has not, among all its relics, some little fancy box, or three-foot-stool, of his workmanship."

On the story of the conversion of *water into wine*, he has some very facetious comments. He observes, "John expressly says that the guests were already intoxicated, '*methutose*,' and God comes down to earth, and performs his first miracle, to enable them to drink still more! Whether Jesus and his mother were as excited, as were others of the company, is not certain. The familiarity of the lady with a soldier implies she was fond of her bottle, and her son was somewhat affected by the wine from his answering his mother so waspishly and snappishly as he did, when he said, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' It may be inferred from these words that Mary was not a virgin, and that Jesus was not her son. Had it been otherwise, he would not thus have insulted his father and mother, in violation of one of the most sacred commandments of the law." He concludes, "however, he (Christ) complied with his mother's request; he fills eighteen jars with water, and makes punch of it." The story of the resurrection of Lazarus he treats with ineffable derision, and denounces as "so brimful of absurdity, that St. John when he wrote it must have outlived his senses!"

Woolston directs especial attention to the dead said to be raised again by Christ. He contends, and very justly, that "a dead man restored to life would have been an object of attention and astonishment to the universe; that all the Jewish magistrates, and more especially Pilate, would have made the most minute investigation, and obtained the most authentic depositions; that Tiberius enjoined all pro-consuls and governors to inform him, with exactness, of every event that took place. But so far from these wonders

being mentioned, the world knew nothing about them till more than 100 years had rolled away from the date of the events, when some obscure individuals show one another the writings recording them. Neither Josephus, nor the learned Philo, nor any Greek or Roman historian, at all notices these prodigies, which, had they really occurred, must have held all nations in amazement !”

But enough of these pious monstrosities — these “wonders,”

“Too heavenly to be understood.”

The day is approaching when they will be read as we now peruse Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. The matured and enlightened mind has outgrown them — aspires after the real — the practical — the rational. — The spirit of the age is pre-eminently scientific, and once let the glorious luminary of science shed its rays placidly and freely upon mankind, and the mysteries, delusions, and impostures of the world will melt away —

“Like the baseless fabric of a vision.”

LECTURE NINTH.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE BIBLE.

FRIENDS—

I AGAIN appear before you to resume our important, and, I trust, not altogether uninteresting inquiry, into the divinity of the Christian Scriptures. On this occasion we propose to consider more of the details of the subject than it was our province to do in our previous address.

We shall proceed to inquire into the consistency of the Bible. I hold that any book emanating from an omniscient Deity must, of necessity, be perfectly consistent in itself in every possible particular.

To suppose such a production as containing discrepancies and incongruities, is virtually to admit that it is liable to error, and, therefore, cannot be our inspired, and certainly not our infallible guide to salvation.

To imagine, for a moment, that a revelation from *omniscience* could contain contradictions, *is itself a contradiction*. If, then, I can show the Bible contains inconsistencies, I prove, beyond the possibility of refutation, that it cannot be divine. It will be a proof, as Dr. Wardlaw remarks, in his Discourses, “sufficiently convincing that the Bible is not from God.” Presuming, therefore, that all my previous reasonings were invalid, if I succeed in *this* argument, I irrefragably establish my position—that *the Bible is an imposture*.

Professor Campbell, in his Preface to the Translation of the Gospels, confesses, that, "If anything were affirmed that is self-contradictory, or anything enjoined that is immoral, we have sufficient internal evidence that such thing cannot proceed from the Father of light, which all the external proofs that could be produced on the other side, would never be able to surmount."

The Rev. S. Horne, in his Introduction to the Scriptures, 2d edit. vol. i. p. 581, also observes, "If real contradictions exist in the Bible, it is sufficient proof that it is not divinely inspired, whatever pretences it may make to such inspiration."

I unhesitatingly aver, my friends, that there is no book extant—no production, ancient or modern, more replete with *contradictions*—contradictions, naked, palpable, and absolute, than the book under discussion. It is one tissue of incongruity from Genesis to Revelations. Had its alleged authors wrote solely to contradict themselves, they could not have been more successful.

Considered as a book of contradictions, the Bible is a most admirable and masterly performance. It is, indeed, unrivalled in this respect.

Looking at the Scriptures, either in a doctrinal or historical point of view, instances of the grossest incongruity present themselves in almost every chapter—if not in every verse.

The fact is, anything may be proved from this "book of riddles," good, bad, or indifferent. It is, emphatically, "*all things to all men.*" It is one of the most *cameleon-like* productions ever composed. Its *color* varies, just according to the chapter you are perusing. Were it possible to read two verses only from this book to any two individuals who had never heard of the Bible before, I could pledge my reputation they would at once declare they could not have been taken from the *same* composition.

Certain I am that, in the whole course of my read-

ing, I never met with a work more *self-contradictory*, or more unworthy of being taken as an authority or standard.

It must be admitted, I presume, that any book which is to be esteemed an authority, and especially a *divine* authority, ought, at least, to possess the attribute of *congruity*. Destitute of *that* excellence, no honest or consistent man can esteem it a satisfactory reference. Now the Bible does not possess *that* attribute. It is so utterly devoid of it, indeed, that to talk of the Bible and consistency appears to me to be as paradoxical and absurd as to talk of George the Fourth and morality, or of Bishop Philpot and charity.

This, I doubt not, may be pronounced an unqualified and sweeping declaration. I intend it to be so. I wish it to be as unqualified as language will admit, as I am assured I am only affirming that which I can incontrovertibly substantiate. By your permission, we will proceed to this demonstration at once, and waive any further prefatory comment, except it be to promise that I shall give chapter and verse for every quotation or reference I make on this occasion, and I distinctly challenge any person to show that I have cited unfairly.

I may observe, that though I have an hour allowed me to treat this subject, I have matter in my possession, the delivery of which, would take me from now until midnight. This discourse, therefore, will necessarily contain only a portion of that which I could adduce did time permit. Nevertheless, I shall endeavor to introduce as much as possible, looking to condensation rather than amplification.

We shall consider the Bible, in the first instance, more in a *doctrinal* than *historical* sense, and commence by showing the incongruous doctrines it inculcates as to the *nature of Deity*.

In John, c. iv., v. 24, we are told, "*God is a spirit,*" *immaterial*, while in Exodus, c. xxxiii., v. 22, 23, we

are told, he exhibited to Moses a portion of his body, which shows, if *that* passage is correct, he is something more than a *spirit*. I refrain from reading the passage. It is too obscene for any respectable auditory. In Prov., c. xv., v. 3, he is represented as having *eyes*. In Isaiah, c. lv., v. 11, a *mouth*; c. lxv., v. 5, a *nose*; c. xxx., v. 27, *lips*. 2 Kings, c. xix., v. 16, *ears*. Ezekiel, c. xliii., v. 7, *feet*. Jeremiah, c. xxi., v. 5, *arms*. Psalms, viii., v. 3, *fingers*. Ezekiel, c. i., v. 27, *loins*. Genesis, c. vi., v. 6, a *heart*. Numbers, c. xxv., v. 16, a *voice*. Genesis, c. ii., v. 7, *lungs*. Exodus, c. xv., v. 8, *nostrils*. Jeremiah, c. iv., v. 19, *bowels*. Isaiah, c. lxix., v. 17, a *head*. Daniel, c. vii., v. 9, *hair*. Exodus, c. xxxiii., v. 11, a *face*. Isaiah, c. xxx., v. 27, a *tongue*. Acts, c. ii., v. 28, *blood*. And in John, c. iii., v. 16, *organs of generation*.

In Ephesians, c. iv., v. 6, we are informed, God is *omnipresent, everywhere*. "He is *above* you all, *through* you all, and *in* you all." But in Habakkuk, c. iii., v. 3, it is said, "God came from Teman," which implies that he had come to a place *where he previously was not*. Now if he was *everywhere*, he would have no occasion to *come* from Teman, as he must have been at the place *already*. For similar passages, see Exodus, c. xix., v. 20. Numbers, c. xi., v. 25; c. xii. v. 5. Isaiah, c. lxvi., v. 18. Exodus, c. xxiv., v. 12. Genesis, c. xvii., v. 22. Luke, c. iii., v. 22, and a multitude of others.

In Matthew, c. xix., v. 26, we are made acquainted with the doctrine of God's *omnipotence*. "With God *all* things are possible:" and yet we are told, in Judges, c. i., v. 19, that he "*could not* drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron."

For parallel passages, see 1 Corin., c. i., v. 25; Exod., c. xxxiv., v. 14; and Gen., c. xxxii., v. 24-30.

In Acts, c. i., v. 24, we are told, God is *omniscient, all-wise*; "he knoweth the hearts of *all* men;" yet

we read in the 1 Corin., c. i., v. 25, of the "*foolishness* of God;" and in Malachi, c. iii., v. 16, that he is obliged to keep "*a book of remembrance.*"

For other passages, proving his finite knowledge, see Gen., c. iii., v. 9, 11; Num., c. xxii., v. 9; 2 Chron., c. xviii., v. 19; and Prov., c. xxvi., v. 10.

In the 1st of John, c. iv., v. 2, it is said, "God is love," while in Deut., c. iv., v. 24, it is stated, he is "a consuming fire." If so, I am afraid his *love* will be of rather *too warm* a nature; but, in Exod., c. xv., v. 3, we are told, "he is a man of war;" and in Nahum, c. i., v. 22, he is "*furious.*" In Hosea, c. xiii., v. 16, he is represented as displaying his "love" in the following manner:—"Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword—their infants shall be dashed to pieces, and their women with child shall be ript up." I could supply you with a thousand passages of a like barbarous nature, but I forbear. I advise you to read Exodus, c. xxxii., v. 27, 28; Deut., c. xxxii., v. 22–26; 1 Sam., c. xv., v. 3; 2 Kings, c. xvii., v. 26; Jer., c. xi., v. 11; and Ezek., c. v., v. 10, 11.

In Romans, c. ii., v. 11, we learn that God is "*impartial,*" has "no respect of persons," notwithstanding in the very same book, c. ix., v. 13, we are assured that God *loved* Jacob, but *hated Esau*; and in 1 Sam., c. ii., v. 7, that he was so *very* "impartial" as to make some *rich*, and others *poor*. For passages of a similar nature, see 2 Tim., c. ii., v. 16; Deut., c. vii. v. 6; 1 Kings, c. iii., v. 12; Daniel, c. i., v. 9.

In Malachi, c. iii., v. 6, we are told God is *immutable*. "For I am the Lord, *I change not.*" In Num., c. xxiii., v. 19, we are informed that "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should *repent*;" yet in Exod., c. xxxii., v. 14, I read, "And the Lord *repented* of the evil which he had thought to do unto his people."

And in Jer., c. xv., v. 6, he exclaims, "I am *weary with repenting.*"

Other passages, equally incompatible with the doctrine of *immutability*, will be found in Gen., c. vi., v. 7; 1 Sam. c. xv., v. 11; 2 Sam., c. xxiv., v. 16; Jer., c. xviii., v. 8, and 10.

We now come to his *incomprehensibility*, of which we read in Colos., c. i., v. 15; Rom., c. xi., v. 33; and Isaiah, c. lv., v. 8. In Colossians it calls him the *invisible* God; and still, in Exod., c. xxiv., v. 9, and 10, it states, that the *seventy* elders of Israel "*saw the God of Israel.*" Amos, c. ix., v. 1, of his book, declares, "I saw the Lord standing upon the altar." In Exod., c. xxxiii. v. 11, we are informed that Moses saw the Lord "face to face;" and we read of several pious impostors who pretend to have enjoyed a similar "honor." See Gen., c. xxxii., v. 30; c. xxvi., v. 2; also, Deut., c. xxxi., v. 15.

We will now speak of the dogmas of *Trinity* and *Unity*. In the 1st John, c. v., v. 7, we read, "For there are *three* that bear record in heaven, — the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." While we discover, in 1 Tim., c. ii., v. 5, that "there is *one* God, and one *Mediator* between God and man — the *man*, Christ Jesus;" and in Isaiah, c. xlvi., v. 9, the Lord is represented as saying, distinctly, "I am God, and there is *none* else." The Trinitarians quote the first of these extracts; the Unitarians, the two last. — Both sects, however, pretend to cite numerous other passages in favor of their respective dogmas. The famous Trinitarian Pastel, as given by Dr. Jortin, vol. iii., p. 100, declares, that there are 11,000 proofs in favor of the Trinity, in the *Old Testament* alone, when interpreted rightly; that is, *etymologico-mystico-cabalistically*." The Unitarians, as stated by Lindsey, affirm that there are more than "*two thousand texts* in the *Old*, and *one thousand* in the *New*, supporting Unitarianism;" thus demonstrating, that upon *this point*, ALONE, there are *thousands* of incongruities in the Scriptures.

I shall refer you to a few more passages in reference

to the *person* of a Deity. In Isaiah, c. xl., v. 11, he is said to be like a *shepherd*; in Lament., c. iii., v. 10, he is compared to a *bear*. In Isaiah, c. xlii., v. 13, to a *mighty* man. In Psalms, lxxviii., v. 65, and 66, a *sleepy* man. In Hosea, c. v., v. 12, he is compared to a *moth*; in c. xiii., v. 7, to a *leopard*.

We find, that in Gen., c. ii., v. 8, he is declared to be a *gardener*; in Gen., c. iii., v. 21, a *tailor*; Gen., c. xxix., v. 31, a *midwife*. Exod., c. i., v. 21, a *house-builder*. Joel, c. iii., v. 8, a *slave dealer*. 1 Corin., c. i., v. 25, a *fool*. Isaiah, c. xxxiv., v. 6, a *butcher*. Isaiah, c. liv., v. 13, a *schoolmaster*. Deut., c. xxxiv., v. 6, a *sexton*. Exod., xxxii., v. 16, a *stonemason*. Ezek., c. xvi., v. 10, a *shoemaker*. Isaiah, c. lxiv., v. 8, a *potter*. Jer., c. xxx., v. 17, a *doctor*. Isaiah, c. vii., v. 20, a *barber*. Acts, c. x., v. 15, a *cook*; and Ex. c. xxxi., v. 6—8, a *candlestick* maker. It is said, again, in Psalms, cxlv., v. 8, that he is “*slow to anger*,” while in 1 Sam., c. vi., v. 19, we are informed, he slew 50,070 persons, all *in an instant*, in a fit of rage. In Psalms, xxx., v. 5, we are assured, that his anger endureth but for a *moment*, while in Numb., c. xxxii., v. 13, he made the Israelites wander in the wilderness, *forty years*—a rather *long* moment, I apprehend. In Micah, c. 7, v. 18, we are informed that he “*delighteth in mercy*,” and yet in Deut., c. vii., v. 2 and 16, we are instructed “*neither to show mercy nor pity*.” In James, c. i., ver. 13, we are told, that God *cannot* be tempted, “*neither tempteth he any man*,” and yet in Gen., c. xxii., v. 1, we read that “*God did tempt Abraham*,” and in Matt., c. vi., v. 13, we are taught to cry out in our prayers, “*and lead us not into temptation*.” In Micah, c. vii., v. 18, God “*pardoneth iniquity*.” In Nahum, c. i., v. 3, “*he will not at all acquit the wicked*.”

In 2 Peter, c. iii., v. 9, God is “*not willing that any should perish*,” and still in Prov., c. xvi., v. 4, he made the wicked in order that they might perish. “*The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*.”

In Prov., c. xii., v. 22, it is said, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord;" and yet in 1 Kings, c. xxii., v. 23, we are actually told that "the Lord hath put a *lying* spirit in the mouths of all these thy prophets."

John, c. i., v. 3., when speaking of God, says, "*All* things were made by him," but Solomon, in his "*wisdom*," c. i., v. 13, intimates that "God made not death;" and Paul, in his 1st Epistle to Corin., c. xiv., v. 33, avers that "God is not the author of confusion."

In Prov., c. xvi., v. 3, we read that the eyes of the Lord are "*in every place*."

In Gen., c. iii., v. 9, God could not find Adam in Paradise, and had to ask, "*where art thou?*" In 1st Kings, c. viii., v. 12, we are informed that the Lord dwelleth in "*thick darkness*;" but Paul, in his 1st Epist. Tim., c. vi., v. 16, says, that no one can approach him on account of his "*great light*."

I have occupied sufficient of your time with incongruities connected with *Deity*; I will now enumerate a few in relation to *his Son*. In Matt. c. v., v. 22, Christ says, "Whosoever shall say, *thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire;" and yet, in identically the same gospel, c. xxiii., v. 17—19, he exclaims, "Ye fools and blind." In John, c. iii., v. 15, he says, "Whosoever *hateth* his brother, is a *murderer*;" and still we are told by the same personage, Luke, c. xiv., v. 26, that we cannot be his disciples, unless we "*hate*" our "*brethren*," and not only our brethren, but our "*wives, children, parents, nay, our own life also*;" glorious consistency! *humane* philosophy! In Matt., c. xxvi., v. 52, it is stated, "Then said *Jesus* unto them, put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword."

In Luke, c. xxii., v. 36, it states, "Then said he, (Christ,) unto them, but now he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword, *let him sell his garment and buy one*."

In Luke, c. xii., v. 4, the following language is at-

tributed to Christ, "And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do;" and still, in John, c. x., v. 39, we read, "Therefore, they sought again to take him, (Christ,) *but he escaped out of their hands.*" And c. vii., v. 1, "And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, *because the Jews sought to kill him.*" In John, c. x., v. 30, he says, "I and my father are *one.*" In c. xiv., v. 28, he says, "My father is greater than I."

He observes again, in Matt., c. v., v. 39, "But I say unto you, that *ye resist not evil*, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, *turn to him the other also.*" In Luke, c. xvii., v. 1, he declares "it is impossible but that offences will come, but *woe* unto him through whom they come." We are told in John, c. iii., v. 17, that "God sent not his Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" and yet Christ himself declares, "Think not that I come to send peace on earth, I come not to send peace, but a *sword.*" A strange mode of saving the world, truly! *Save* me from such "*salvation,*"—"save me from my friends."

Having developed a few, and only a few, of the inconsistencies in the character of God and Christ, contained in this "infallible" and "inspired" volume, I purpose, prior to entering into the historical part, to point out a few incongruities in its alleged facts and doctrines.

We will begin with the Ten Commandments, Exodus, c. xx., v. 1—17.

These laws comprise the *pith* of the moral doctrines of the Jews. The first commandment says, v. 3, "Thou shalt have *no other Gods before me*; and yet God declares, in the same book, Exod., c. vii., v. 1, "*I have made thee a God to Pharaoh.*" And in Gen., c. i, v. 26, we read, "Let us make man in *our* image;" implying, that there must be a *plurality* of Gods.

In the second commandment, the Israelites were

strictly enjoined not to make any "graven images, or any likeness of anything that is in *heaven above*, or that is in the *earth beneath*, or in the *water under the earth*."

Singularly enough, they are told by God, only a chapter or two afterwards, (c. xxv., v. 18,) to make two "cherubims of gold"—to make a likeness of one of the celestial animals—something that is in the "heavens above!"

The same commandment informs us, "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the father upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

But we read in Ezek., c. xviii., v. 20, that "the son shall *not* bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."

The third injunction states, v. 7, that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain;" and yet in Nahum, c. i., v. 3, we are told, that the Lord "pardoneth iniquity." And Jer., c. xxxi., v. 34, says, that he "will remember their sins no more."

The fourth commandment insists that the Sabbath day should be kept "holy." We must do *no manner* of work; but Christ himself demurred to that doctrine, in Mark, c. iii., v. 5. *He* held that it was *lawful* to do what work *we* conceived good, on the Sabbath day.

In Matt., c. xii., v. 5, he remarks, in justification of this, "Now have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days, the priests of the temple profane the Sabbath, and are *blameless*?"

The fifth law, v. 12, commands us to "honor thy father and thy mother;" while we are told by Christ, in Luke, c. xiv., v. 26, that if we "hate not our father and our mother" we "cannot be *his* disciples."

In the sixth, it is said, "Thou shalt not kill;" while in Exod., c. xxxii., v. 27, of the very same book, we are told to "put every man his sword by

his side, and go in and out from gate to gate, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor."

But in 2 Kings, c. x., v. 30, the "Lord" actually declares that *murder* is "*right*" and *rewards* Jehu for committing it. "His children," says he, "to the third and fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

The seventh law states, "Thou shalt not commit *adultery*." But, in Isaiah, c. xiii., v. 16, the Lord says of the Babylonians, that "their children shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses shall be spoiled, *and their wives ravished*." There are many other passages, but they are too obscene and revolting to quote.

I could cite *one* instance in particular, mentioned in Matt., c. i., v. 18, but I presume it is blasphemy, even to allude to it.

The eighth law declares, "Thou shalt not *steal*."—But the Lord commands the Israelites, in Exod., c. iii. v. 22, to "spoil the Egyptians," to rob them of their "jewels of gold, silver, and raiment." Strange morality, this! Consistent book—infallible and immaculate oracle of truth and goodness!

We will now briefly refer to the doctrine of *immortality*. Christians pretend to quote many passages in favor of this dogma, such as, John, c. v., v. 28, and 29; John, c. xx., v. 11—16; v. 24—27; c. xxi., v. 12—14; Acts, c. i., v. 9—11; and Matt. c. xxvii., v. 52.

The last apostle tells us that "the graves were opened and many bodies of saints which slept *arose*." Now, it is said, in Job, c. vii., v. 9, "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, *so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more!*" In Eccles., c. iii., v. 19—22, "For that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them. As one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, *so that man hath no pre-eminence over a beast*. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, *and*

all turn to dust again." A pretty prospect this for the soul-mongers! In Psalms, however, cxlvi., v. 4, it distinctly says, that man's "breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth; *in that very day his thoughts perish.*"

In reference to the *duration of the world*, we find very opposite doctrines promulgated. Eccles., c. i., v. 4, says, that "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the *earth* abideth FOREVER." But Matt., c. xiii., v. 49, talks of the "end of the world," and about the angels coming forth, &c. And Peter, in his second Epistle, c. iii., v. 10, states, that "the *earth* also and the works that are therein shall be *burnt up!*"

In Romans, c. iii., v. 28, it is said, "a man is justified by *faith*, *without* the deeds of the law." But, in James, c. ii., v. 24, it is remarked, "Ye see, then, how that by *works* a man is justified, *and not by faith only.*" In Ephes., c. ii., v. 8, it says, "For by grace are ye saved, through *faith.*" But it is affirmed in James, c. xi., v. 20, "that *faith without works is dead.*" Respecting the *Sabbath*, we are told in Exod., c. xx., v. 10, that it is the *seventh* day in the week; while in John, c. xx., v. 1, we are told it is the *first* day. Which are we to believe?

The following exhibits a few other glaring discrepancies. In Micha, c. iv., v. 3, we read that "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more.*" And yet we are ordered to do *diametrically* the reverse of this in Joel, c. iii., v. 10, "Beat your ploughshares into *swords*, and your pruning hooks into *spears*, let the weak say I am strong." In 1 Tim., c. ii., v. 4, we are assured that the Lord is solicitous that all should "come unto the knowledge of the *truth.*" But, in 2 Thes., c. ii., v. 11, it is said, "God should send them strong delusion that they should believe a *lie!*" In Prov., c. iv., v. 7,

we are advised to "get wisdom" and "get understanding;" and yet we are assured in Eccles., c. i., v. 18, that "in much wisdom is much *grief*, and he that increaseth *knowledge* increaseth *sorrow*."

In Matt., c. x., v. 16, Christ says, "Be ye wise as serpents;" and still in 1 Corin., c. i., v. 19, we are told that the Lord "will *destroy* the wisdom of the wise." In Psalms, c. xcii., v. 12, we read, "the righteous shall *flourish* like the palm tree." But in Isaiah, c. lvii., v. 1, it is stated, that the "righteous *perisheth*." In Romans, c. iii., v. 10, it is affirmed, that "There is *none* righteous—*no, not* one."

But we are told in Gen., c. vi., v. 9, that Noah was a "righteous man," and in the Epistle of James, c. v., v. 16, it says, "The prayers of a *righteous* man availeth much." Why should James make such an observation, if there were no righteous men? "Pray *without ceasing*," says Paul, 1 Thess., c. v., v. 17.

But if we do, says the Lord in Isaiah, c. i., v. 15, "I will not hear." John observes, c. iii., v. 13, "*No* man hath ascended up into heaven." But in 2 Kings, c. ii., v. 11, we learn that *Elijah* "ascended up into heaven" by a "*whirlwind*!"

"No man hath seen God *at any time*," says John, c. i., v. 18; yet in Exod., c. xxxiii., v. 11, we are told Moses saw him "face to face;" and in c. xxiv., v. 9–11, that the seventy elders of Israel, saw him and *dined* with him.

In Exod., c. xxxiii., v. 20, we are assured that no man shall see the Lord "and *live*;" and yet we are informed in Gen., c. xxxii., v. 30, that Jacob saw the Lord, and *fought* with him and his life was "*preserved*."

Further inconsistencies will be found in the following references. In Gen., c. i., v. 1, it states that *heaven* was created on the *first* day, while in v. 6–8, it says it was created on the *second*. In Gen., c. i., v. 27, it is said, God created man *in his own image*. But in Psalms, c. lxxxix., v. 6, it is asked, "Who is

like the Lord?" In Gen., c. i., v. 28, God blesses those who are *fruitful* and *multiply*. In Luke, c. xxiii., v. 29, the *barren*, not the *fruitful*, are blessed. In Gen., c. i., v. 31, it says, "*All that God created was good.*" Yet in Isa., c. xlv., v. 7, the Lord says, "*I create evil.*" In Gen., c. ii., v. 8, we are told, it is *not* good for man to be *alone*, while in 1 Corin., c. vii., v. 1, we read that it is "*good not to touch a woman.*" In Gen., c. iii., v. 6, it is said the woman saw *before* she ate of the fruit, while in the very next verse it says, her eyes were opened *after* eating. In Gen., c. iv., v. 15, Cain was marked that he should *not* be killed, while in c. ix., v. 6, it says the "blood shedder" must "*die.*" In Gen., c. iv., v. 16, we are told Cain went from the presence of the Lord, while in Psalms, cxxxix., v. 7, we are told *we cannot go from his presence*. In Gen., c. vi., v. 5-7, we are informed the earth was to be destroyed *because it was evil*, while in c. viii., v. 21, it is stated that was the *very reason* it was *not* to be destroyed, and in Gen., c. viii., v. 22, we read, "Seed time and harvest shall *never* cease," while in c. xlv., v. 6, it is said, the earth should be *five years without either "eating or harvest!"* In Gen., c. x., v. 5, we are told each man was divided after his tongue, while in the very next chapter, v. 11, we are informed that the whole earth was *one* tongue. In Exod., c. iv., v. 21, it states, that *God* hardened Pharaoh's heart, but in c. viii., v. 15, we read that *Pharaoh* hardened *his own heart*. In Exod., c. xxv., v. 8, God says, "Make me a *sancturay* to dwell in." Yet, in Acts, c. vii., v. 48, we are told God dwelleth not in *temples made with hands*. In Deut., c. xii., v. 20, it says, "Eat flesh *whenever* thy soul lusteth." And yet in Rom. c. xiv., v. 21, we are warned that it is *not good* to eat flesh. In 2 Sam., c. vi., v. 23, it says, Michal, the daughter of Saul, had *no* children; but in c. xxi., v. 8, of the *same book*, it states she had five!!! In 2 Sam., c. xxiv., v. 1, it states that *God* moved David

to number Israel : and yet in 1 Chron., c xxi., v. 1, that *Satan* provoked him to number them. Perhaps, God and the Devil were one and the same in those days. In 2 Sam., c. ii., v. 1-5, we read that David went to Hebron, and was made king of *Judah* only, while in 1 Chron., c. xi., v. 1-3, it says, he went to Hebron, and was made king over *all Israel*. In Matt., c. v., v. 39, we are commanded to "Resist not evil ;" but in James, c. iv., v. 7, it bids us to "resist the Devil ;" but, perhaps, the Devil is not an evil—certainly not the *parsons'*—for if *he* was to make his exit, *their* "occupation would be gone." In Gen., c. iv., v. 13-14, we are told that when the Lord cursed Cain, and sent him as a vagabond through the earth, Cain said that every one who found him would slay him. Now, who could "every one" be, when, according to the Bible, there was no one then in existence, Abel being murdered, but his own father and mother? In v. 16, 17, it says Cain went to the land of Nod, and got a *wife*. Where did he get her? There was no female then in existence but Eve—his own mother. The same verse, 17, says that Cain *built* a *city*. But, who was to inhabit it, pray? There were only himself and his wife, and his infant son Enoch living—a very numerous population to require a city for their home! I hope they had room enough. But did Cain build the city himself? *That* he could not do. Where then did he find the workmen? Such are the discrepancies and contradictions which crowd this *infallible* book. A pretty production to be called God's word! I do not know whether God is ashamed to own it, but I should be.

The *historical* incongruities are singularly glaring and manifold. So multitudinous are they, indeed, that they would fill a volume of themselves. I must confine my animadversions to the *New Testament*, and to one portion only—the *Gospels*. These books record the Pedigree, Miraculous Conception, Birth, Career, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of

Christ. They afford one of the most extraordinary instances of incongruous and contradictory history extant. Le Clerc, in his *Sant.*, p. 285, might well observe, that "theologians have labored more than 1000 years to reconcile them, *but without success.*"

Bishop Marsh, too, a most learned English divine and professor, confesses, in his celebrated lectures, that after all his attempts to reconcile the contradiction of St. John's account of the resurrection with that of Mark and Luke, he has not been able to do it in a manner satisfactory either to himself, or to any impartial inquirer into truth! No less than 200 harmonies or attempts to reconcile the gospels are already in print.

In respect to the pedigree or genealogy of Christ—in the first place, Luke's account is quite inconsistent with Matthew's, as well as with the Old Testament. Matthew says, c. i., v. 17, that from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, but according to *his own* list of names there can be only thirteen. He also affirms that from David to the captivity were fourteen generations, but according to the pedigree, in the Old Testament, 1 Chron., c. v., v. 10 to 15, there were eighteen. Total number of generations from Abraham to Christ, he estimates at forty-two, while his own list gives only forty! A pretty calculator, truly! not consistent with himself, much less with other inspired historians. Luke's genealogy, c. iii., v. 23 to 38, records forty-three generations, and strange to say, these infallible men, Matthew and Luke, only agree in two names out of the forty-three, viz., David and Joseph—and even in relation to the progenitor of Joseph they do not agree. Luke says, v. 23, he was the son of Heli, but Matthew says, v. 16, he was the son of Jacob.

One of these infallible gentlemen must have made a mistake. If Matthew spoke the truth, Luke must have spoken a falsehood, and *vice versa*. Falsehood, then, in the case, there must be—nay, it is a false-

hood altogether, if we are to believe Matthew, c. i., v. 18. These evangelical historians quote these genealogies to prove that Jesus is of the family of David. We trace the pedigree of Joseph up to David, and infer that Christ being the son of Joseph, he descended from the man after God's own heart. Now, in the verse just referred to, we are told that Christ was not the son of Joseph—but the son of a ghost! What a blunder! What accurate genealogists! These gentlemen should have given us the pedigree of the wily ghost, not that of simple Joseph. What a pity it is the world has not been supplied with such a *curiosity*!

Let us speak of the *miraculous conception*; and *miraculous*, indeed, it is! Matthew says, c. i., v. 20, the angel appeared unto Joseph, in a dream, and told him of his good fortune—but Luke says, c. i., v. 30 to 35, the angel did not appear unto the old gentleman, but unto Mary herself. Which story is correct? I am afraid it is all a *dream*, and a very stupid one too!

In the account of the *birth* of Christ there are many contradictory statements. Matthew tells us, c. ii., v. 1, that on his nativity in Bethlehem, there came wise men of the east to worship him; while Luke states, c. ii., v. 8, that it was only a number of ignorant shepherds who came, and who, instead of coming from the east, only came from the immediate neighborhood. Matthew observes, c. ii., v. 2, that these strangers were directed to Bethlehem by a star; Luke, however, states, c. ii., v. 9 that it was an angel who led them.

I have affirmed that the career of Christ, from his birth to his death, is given by these inspired men very inconsistently. I will give you a few cases:—First, of the story of Joseph escaping with Christ and his mother to Egypt, immediately after his birth, to avoid Herod's persecution. Matthew is the only one who mentions this very important event, c. ii., v. 13; Luke states. on the contrary, c. ii., v. 21, that they

did not go, but remained where they were until after Christ was circumcised, and that they went up with him to Jerusalem, to present him in the temple, the most public place in the kingdom, and almost into Herod's presence!!! What consistency!

Calling the apostles. Matthew, c. iv., v. 18, tells us that Christ was walking by the sea of Galilee, and Peter and Andrew were in their ships fishing, when he called them; but Luke affirms, c. v., v. 5, that Christ himself was sitting in their ships teaching the people on shore, and the fishermen were out washing their nets. John's story, however, c. i., v. 35 to 42, is different from both. He says nothing about these men being fishermen, nor is there the least allusion to fishing. He informs us that they were merely followers of John the Baptist.

Another case is the calling of an apostle, whose name Matthew says, c. ix., v. 9, was Matthew; but Mark declares, c. ii., v. 14, his name was Levi—and yet, according to their own list, there was not an apostle of that name!

Christ's sermon on the Mount is mentioned in Matthew, c. i., v. 17, that he delivered this famous sermon while *standing* in a PLAIN. Matthew's statement, therefore, of his delivering it while *sitting* on a *hill*, is inconsistent with Luke's. When he had concluded this memorable discourse, Matthew remarks, c. viii., v. 2, that he cleansed a leper; but Mark records, c. i., v. 40, that he performed this cure when he was preaching in the synagogues throughout Galilee.

In Matthew, c. viii., v. 5, we are informed, that when Christ arrived at Capernaum, *a centurion came to him* and begged of him to come and heal his servant; but Luke says, c. vii., v. 3—7, that the centurion only *sent for him*. Which was the fact?

Similar inconsistencies will be found in the story of his curing Peter's wife—casting out of devils, and sending them into the herd of swine, and other tales too contemptible to mention.

We will proceed to the meeting of John the Baptist and Christ. By referring to Matthew, c. x., and xi., we learn that it was *after* Christ had sent out his apostles, that John sent his message to Christ; but by reading Luke, c. vii., and ix., we find that it was *before* he sent out his apostles, that John sent to him.

The story of feeding the multitude, is replete with contradictions. Matthew says, c. xiv., v. 21, that there were 5000, besides women and children; but in Luke, c. ix., v. 14, no women and children are mentioned. In Matthew, c. xv., v. 34, we are told they had seven loaves and a few little fishes; Luke says, (to improve upon the miracle,) that they had only five loaves and two fishes, and that there were 12 baskets full of fragments left.

The account of Christ's anointment, also, affords an instance of the irreconcilable disagreement of the evangelical history. Matthew, c. xxvi., v. 2, and Mark, c. xiv., v. 1, tell us, this was done two days before the last Passover; but John, c. xii., v. 1, says it was six days; Luke, however, c. vii., v. 36, declares that it was more than two years before that period. The place wherein it was performed, Matthew and Mark say, was the house of Simon the Leper; but Luke states, it was in the house of a Pharisee; while John records it as occurring in the house of Lazarus! Matthew and Mark say the woman poured the ointment on his head; but, according to Luke and John, it was on his feet—a pretty concordance, truly!

Did time permit, I could edify you with some singular and amusing discrepancies in the stories of the transfiguration of Christ, his restoring the blind, his taking the ass, the last supper, his denial by Peter, his betrayal by Judas, &c.,—but having almost occupied my time, I must hasten to the account of his crucifixion.

Matthew relates, c. xxvii., v. 34, that when they had brought Christ to the place of execution, they gave

him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall; but Mark records, c. xv., v. 25, that it was wine mingled with myrrh. Which was it? Which of these "infallible" men speak the truth? Mark states, c. xv., v. 25, that he was crucified at the third hour; but John says it was the sixth. Matthew informs us that both the thieves, who were executed with Christ, reviled him; but Luke says it was only one of them who reviled him, and the other rebuked his companion for so doing! Which account is true?

Similar inconsistencies will also be detected in the accounts given of the superscription placed over the head of Christ, and also in many other matters, but I have not time to enumerate them.

I must speak of the resurrection. First, of those who came to the sepulchre. Matthew, c. xxviii., v. 1, states, that it was Mary Magdalene, and another Mary who came; Luke says, c. xxiv., v. 10, it was the two Marys, and Johanna and other women, who came; while, according to John, c. xx., v. 1, Mary Magdalene came alone!! Well may there be a necessity for priests to write "harmonies to the gospels."

Matthew, c. xxviii., v. 2, observes, that an "angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, *and sat upon it*;" while Mark, c. xvi., v. 4, mentions, that he was *not* sitting outside, but *inside the sepulchre, on the right side*. We learn from Matthew, that the visitants *went away from the sepulchre somewhat abruptly*; but Mark says, they *went into it*. When they entered, Mark declares that they saw *one* young man, clothed in a long *white* garment, (whether it was a shirt or surplice, we do not learn,) *sitting* at the right side; but Luke gives an opposite statement—he says, there were *two* young men, and they were standing, and had on *shining* garments.—Matthew records, c. xxviii., v. 5, 6, that the angel told the women of Christ's rising from the dead; but John says, c. xx., v. 14—17, that Christ told them himself; according to Luke, c. xxiv., v. 12, when Peter

came to the sepulchre, he only looked into it, and did *not* go in; but John affirms, c. xx., v. 5, 6, that he *did* go in, and *another disciple with him*; Matthew relates, c. xxviii., v. 9, that when they saw him, they *worshipped* him, and *held him by the feet*; but John declares, c. xx., v. 17, that Christ *would not let them touch him!* What consistency! What infallibility!

We now approach the last scene of this amusing farce — the *Ascension*. In Matthew, c. xxviii., v. 7—17, it is intimated, that the disciples went to Galilee to meet Jesus, *according to appointment*; but Luke tells us, c. xxiv., v. 33—36, he appeared to them *unexpectedly at Jerusalem*; Luke says, also, that when they *did* meet him, the disciples were *terrified*; but John says, c. xx., v. 20, they were glad to meet him!

According to Luke, v. 35, the whole of the eleven apostles were there; but John states, that the apostle *Thomas was absent*, and when told of it, *he would not believe it*. Incredulous man! Mark says, c. xvi., v. 19, that Christ ascended into heaven, *from the place where the apostles were sat at meat*; but Luke affirms, c. xxiv., v. 50, that he first led them out to *Bethany*, and that there his ascension took place.

In Luke, c. xxiv., v. 13, we read, that Christ's ascension took place on the *same day* as his *resurrection* — in the evening; while we understand from John, c. xx., v. 26, that he appeared to his disciples several times, and remained upon the earth *many days*; (some say forty,) performing so many “wonders,” that John says, if they were written, the *WORLD* would not be large enough *to contain ALL the books!!!* With this marvellous statement, John closes his gospel, and verily *it is a closer!*

Consistent evangelists — “inspired” and “infallible” historians, indeed, scarcely to agree in any one particular, on any subject! Were the same number of incongruities, equally gross and palpable, exhibited by four witnesses, in the meanest court in the land, upon the most frivolous case imaginable, their testi-

mony would be scouted with indignation and contempt. Why then should such evidence be admitted in relation to matters which are solemnly proclaimed to be, of all others, the most sacred and momentous, involving the welfare of humanity, both now and "through life everlasting"? Strange infatuation!—Blind credulity! Monstrous perversion of common sense, and moral principle!

My friends, I have reviewed a few, and but a few, of the inconsistencies observable in this precious production. Though I have only presented a modicum of what could be adduced, I flatter myself I have offered sufficient to invalidate the credibility of *any* book, much less one which is alleged to be *divinely inspired*. That man who would venture to uphold the infallibility of the Bible, in the face of this prodigious mass of incongruity, is one who would set at naught all acknowledged criterion of truth, and all established principles of rational evidence, and the best advice I can render him is to "get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get *understanding*."

LECTURE TENTH.

THE MORALITY OF THE BIBLE.

FRIENDS—

This evening we shall discuss the *morality* of the Bible. Believers in this book are remarkably fond of exhibiting its excellencies in this respect. When driven from every other position, they generally take refuge behind what they term the *divine* "morals" of the "Word of God." However discomfited they may have been upon other questions connected with the divinity of the Scriptures, on resorting to *this* "strong-hold," their courage is revived, and, like the *omnipotent* Deity after *resting* on the seventh day, they return to the encounter quite "refreshed." I must say, it is somewhat astonishing, such bravado and exultation should be exhibited upon a point, in which I conceive, the Scriptures are more vulnerable than any other. I cannot account for such a paradox, except that the Christian world, knowing their weakness upon this head, are desirous to supply the deficiency, by assumption and dogmatism. Things generally make the greatest noise when they are most empty.

My friends, if there is one thing connected with this controversy clearer than another, it is that the Bible is an *immoral* publication. I will allow, before I proceed, that there are a *few* redeeming qualities—a sprinkling of good passages, (and in what book is

there not *something* good?) but these passages are so rare, that "like angels' visits," they are "few and far between." But, even the unexceptionable parts, limited though they be, are by no means original. Most of them are merely borrowed from other productions, as it is incontestable that moral precepts, equally admirable, were taught by the sages of Greece, the philosophers of Rome, the Brahmins of India, and the Reformer of China, long anterior to the introduction of Christianity—before either the Old or New Testament were written.

I shall comment at length upon this subject in a subsequent lecture. I will only remark, at this moment, that Thales, Pittacus, and Confucius, wise and good men, whose ethics, in many respects, were identical with those of the Scriptures, flourished at a much *earlier* period than Christianity. Thales lived 600 years before Christ; Pittacus, 570; and Confucius, 500. These three distinguished men taught the *very* doctrine of which Christians are so proud, and affirm is so eminently peculiar to their system, viz., "Do unto others as you would wish others to do unto you."

Thales says, "Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing." Pittacus enjoins, "Avoid doing that to your neighbor which you would take amiss if he were to do to you." And Confucius taught, "Do to another what you would they should do unto you, and do *not* unto another what you would should not be done unto you; thou only needest *this* law alone; it is the foundation and principle of all the rest."—Moral 24.

These sentiments are exactly the same as those enforced by Christ 500 years *afterwards*.

Mr. Dunlap, in his justly celebrated defence of Abner Kneeland, the American Freethinker, indignantly asks, "Was there no morality in the days of Homer, Pythagoras, Solon, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Virgil? Was there no morality in the vast, populous, and

civilized empire of China in the time of Confucius? Was there no morality in the kingdom of Egypt, where, before even the *commandments* were given, 'mid the thunders of Mount Sinai, Benjamin was accused of an offence against morality, because of the cup of Joseph which was found in his sack? Was there no morality among the immense nations of the American continent, stretching almost from pole to pole, till the lofty and daring genius of Columbus impelled him to the discovery of the New World? Has there been no morality from the earliest times in those seats of innocence and contemplation, the dwellings of the Brahmins?" Granting, then, that there may be a *few* moral precepts in the Bible, they are but *borrowed*—second-hand; and, therefore, if we are indebted to any one for these morals, it is not to Christianity, but to men greater than any recorded in the "Holy Word."

Not only, however, are these precepts not original, but many of them are utterly impracticable, and, therefore, useless; nay, some, if they were to be literally followed, would be *actually pernicious*, inasmuch as they would destroy the physical and mental industry of man, and inevitably lead to famine, ignorance, and misery. For instance, in Matt., c. vi., v. 25, 26, we are told to "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" What would follow the practice of such a doctrine as this? Utter confusion, want, and degradation. Supposing the people were to adopt it—supposing the working classes were to begin to exhibit such pious indifference to things carnal, and, in pursuance of that virtuous resolve, were to acquaint his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury that they

were truly penitent for having so long committed so grievous a sin as to earn their bread (and *his* bread,) by the "sweat of their brow," and that now they were really determined upon being good Christians, in "caring not as to what they should eat, or what they should drink," but that they and *he*, and the rest of the idle drones of the community, should depend for their subsistence, "like the fowls of the air," upon their "heavenly father," how queer he would look, and how he would laugh at them for adopting *the very system he is paid to teach!* Heaven knows it would be a fortunate thing for the starving *millions* if this doctrine could be *really* practised! Many are they who are now precluded from producing food either to "eat," or to "drink." I would advise them, therefore, "to shut their eyes, open their mouth, and see what God will send them," and never more be so *wicked* and *irreligious* as to wish to work to provide for themselves and families!

Again, in Mark, c. v., v. 44, it is said, "Love your enemies." But who can do this? It is morally impossible. You may *pity* your enemies—*forgive* them, but so long as they *are* your enemies, you cannot *love* them. It is inherent in human nature that man should like that which imparts pleasure, and dislike that which produces pain. You might as well, therefore, have been commanded to love the viper that would destroy you, as the enemy who would ruin you.

From these instances, it is obvious, that what little morality the Bible contains is stolen, impracticable, or absurd.

Considering this notorious oracle, therefore, in the most *favorable* point of view, it is but a *miserable* production.

We will now glance at the dark side of the picture, and *dark indeed it is!* What scenes of crime, butchery, and obscenity open to our view! My blood grows cold with horror when I think of the atrocities which it details.

If, my friends, there be no other argument against the divinity of the Bible but its *immorality* and *obscenity*, THAT alone is sufficient to condemn it. A book emanating from a Being of purity, wisdom, and love, would of necessity have been presented free from all moral impurity, and clothed in language beautiful and chaste. To assert, therefore, that a book like the Bible is a *revelation* from such a Being, is to aver that which is truly monstrous. Talk of blasphemy and blasphemers—if there be such a thing as “blasphemy,” and such men as “blasphemers”—they are certainly those who maintain the *divinity of the Bible!* Its pages ought to make any virtuous and enlightened man blush.

Apprehend not, that I intend to wound your feelings, or offend propriety, by quoting these obscenities. I would not pollute my lips with them. However *Christians* may *admire* them, I should feel for the individual who would attempt to read them *publicly*. I shall, therefore, abstain from quoting the impurities of the Bible. Those who wish to become acquainted with *that* portion of the subject, would perhaps do well to possess themselves of a small work of mine, entitled “The Holy Scriptures Analyzed, or Extracts from the Bible; showing its contradictions, absurdities, and immoralities.”

I find on reading the celebrated discussion between the Rev. Mr. Greg and the Rev. Mr. Maguire, at Dublin, (the former a Protestant minister, and the latter a Catholic priest,) Mr. Maguire made the following observations upon this point:—“I beg of you not to continue such a practice; it is *disreputable*. I will ask Mr. Greg a question, and I beg of you my brethren of the Protestant Church to bear this in mind, I will ask him, if he *dare* to take up the Bible and read from the book of Genesis the fact of Onan—I ask him will he read that? Will he read the fact relative to Lot and his two daughters? Will he read these and many other passages which I could point

out to him in the Holy Bible, which I would not take one thousand guineas, nay, all the money in the world, and read it here to-day." A significant circumstance that a *priest* should be *ashamed* to read from a book which he believes was inspired by God! Listen to the extraordinary declaration of Richard Lalor Shiel, Esq., M. P., member of the Whig administration, and one of the privy councillors to the Queen. In the Church of Ireland Magazine for 1825, the following language is ascribed to that brilliant orator:—"Many passages in Scripture were written with such force, and he might say, with nakedness of diction, as rendered them UNFIT for indiscriminate perusal. There were parts of the Old Testament in which images of voluptuousness were presented to the mind on which the imagination of a youthful female ought not to be permitted to repose. He would venture to assert that the Odes of Anacreon did not display more luxury of imagination, or combine more *sensual* associations than parts of the Old Testament. The Bible contained details of atrocity at which human nature shuddered. Part of the holy writings consisted of history, and of the narration of facts of a kind that could not be mentioned in the presence of a virtuous woman without exciting HORROR. Should a woman be permitted to read in her chamber, what she would tremble to hear at her domestic board? Shall she con over and revolve what she would rather die than utter?"

What kind of a book, my friends, can that be, at the perusal of which, a virtuous mind must shudder? Can it be the word of a God? Ah! let the Christian world blush at their effrontery, and cease to exclaim against "blasphemy and impiety."

Having explained myself upon this subject, I shall proceed to consider some of those passages which inculcate or connive at immorality. I shall begin, by describing the leading characters of the Bible—the heroes of this improbable tale, the favorites of the

Bible God ! These personages, we might have presumed, were paragons of perfection, the beau ideal of intellectual and moral beauty, but instead of such presumption being realized, I boldly assert that the majority of them were the most cunning, cruel, and despicable characters on record.

The first of these Scripture paragons I shall name, is Noah — the only individual, with his family, who was considered worthy of being saved at the Deluge. Surely, he was a moral man. Very moral ! for we read in Gen., c. ix., v. 21, 22, that he was found in such a state of obscene drunkenness, that I forbear quoting the passage. If there were many Noahs in the world, teetotalism, I apprehend, would be at a discount. I will ask, was it a moral act upon the part of Noah, to curse his own son ? See Gen., c. ix., v. 25. If all fathers were to take Noah as a pattern, paternal affection would be unknown.

Abraham, the patriarch, we read in Gen., c. 20, v. 1—5, uttered the most barefaced falsehood to Abimelech, King of Gerar. He unblushingly told him that his wife was not his wife, but only his sister ; and in Gen., c. xxi., v. 9, 10—14, we learn, that he put out one of his wives, the Egyptian Hagar, and left her and her child to wander in the “wilderness of Beer-sheba.” The unfeeling brute !

Isaac, the son of Abraham, another very prominent character in the early history of the Bible, followed the virtuous example of his father. In Gen. c. xxvi., v. 7—9, it states that he, also, denied his wife. The story is truly obscene.

Jacob, the favored son of Isaac, and the person whom, we read in Malachi, c. i., v. 2, 3, the Lord loved so much, endeavored to deceive his own father, Gen. c. xxvii., v. 19. He, also, robbed his own brother, Esau, as stated in v. 36 ; and in c. xxix., and xxx., we read of his perpetrating three of the greatest crimes that a man could commit—incest, polygamy, and adultery.

Moses, the "meekest man" in history, and private secretary to the Bible-God, was a deliberate murderer—a wretch, who, in this country, would be deemed unfit to live. In Exodus, c. ii., v. 11, 12, we read, "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens, and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way, and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." This is absolute, unqualified homicide. But Moses was, also, an instigator to murder, on a large scale, as seen particularly in Numbers, c. xxxi. He was, likewise, an inciter to prostitution, as evidenced in v. 17, and 18, of that chapter. The butcheries, indeed, committed at the instance of that divine favorite, are unparalleled.

Joshua was well worthy of his meek predecessor. The atrocities perpetrated by him, "in the name of the Lord," are truly frightful—I decline quoting them. You may refer to the book of Joshua, c. x., v. 17—26, if you are disposed to gratify your curiosity.

Samuel, the next Bible hero, was the *beau ideal* of a priest. To *reason* with his opponents, he considered a loss of time. He could best dispose of their objections, *by cutting off their heads!* We are told, in the 1st Samuel, c. xv., v. 33, that he "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord, in Gilgal;" and in v. 3, of the same chapter, we observe his priestly hatred so implacable, that it extended itself to the very *brutes*. He orders Saul to go and "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, camel and ass!" A pretty command to be given by one of a body of men who ought to be examples to their fellow creatures!

We read, in 2 Kings, c. ii., v. 23, 24, that Elisha, another Bible hero, and "man of God," cursed some little children "in the name of the Lord," for simply

exclaiming, in their childish frolic, "bald-head;" and that the Lord very kindly listened to his curses, and instantly there appeared two she bears, who devoured forty-two of the youngsters! Such an old "inspired" brute was highly deserving of Biblical distinction.

David, who is called "the man after God's own heart," and, therefore, the person, who, above all others, ought to have afforded the finest specimen of humanity, was the very embodiment of depravity and brutality. In the 2d Samuel, c. xi., v. 2-6, we are told of his committing adultery under the most revolting circumstances. In the 1st Samuel, c. xxi., v. 12, 13, we learn of his descending to the most disgusting dissimulation before Achish, the King of Gath. In 2d Samuel, c. xii., v. 29-31, a scene of the most horrible butchery is presented to us, occasioned by this prototype of the Bible Deity. He put the people of Rabbah "under *saws* and under *harrows of iron*, and *axes of iron*, and made them pass through the *brick-kilns*; and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon." Cruelty like this could not be surpassed. David exhibited his natural ferocity of character even upon his very death-bed. Speaking of the son of Gera, a Benjamite, he enjoins his son Solomon, almost in his last breath, "Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless, for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood!" 1 Kings, c. ii., v. 8, 9. Did ever mortal man die with such a curse on his lips? Did any father, at such a moment, exhort a child to the commission of such crimes! Oh! what an example to the world! What morality! What humanity!

Solomon's career, though he is proclaimed to be the "wisest man" that ever lived, was only that of a voluptuary and debauchee. Were the human race to follow his *bright* example, virtue and chastity would be mere names. To convince you of the justness of my remarks, I need but remind you that in 1 Kings,

c. xi., v. 3, it states, "And he (Solomon) had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned away his heart!" His songs, which from his "*wisdom*," ought to have been the perfection of purity and correctness of style, are so lascivious, that many of them would disgust the most depraved bacchanalian. I will not quote them. You may read them for yourselves, particularly c. vii., v. 1-4.

The characters here reviewed constitute the "great lights" of the *Old Testament*, and pretty lights they are! Those of the *New* are Jesus Christ—and his three principal apostles, Paul, Peter, and John. In my third address, I had occasion to speak at length of Christ and the two former apostles, as illustrative of the system of imposture pursued by the early Christians, to which observations I beg to refer you. I need not, therefore, on this occasion, occupy much of your time with remarks upon these passages.

I may ask, however, what morality is there in the following account of the *genealogy* of Jesus Christ, the "Saviour" of the world—one whose origin, above all other beings, should have been honorable and illustrious? I will quote the language of Dr. Alexander Walker, in his work on "Woman," p. 330,—a writer eminent as a *Christian*, not an *Infidel*. Had such an observation been made by one of *my* class, it would have been denounced "blasphemous." "It is remarkable," says he, "that, in the genealogy, of Christ, only four women have been named! Thamar, who seduced the father of her late husband; Rachel, a common prostitute; Ruth, who, instead of marrying one of her cousins, *went to bed with another of them*; and *Bethsheba an adulteress*, who espoused David, *the murderer of her first husband*!" What a pedigree!—and for the "Son of God," too! I should be ashamed of such an origin. No wonder that our virtuous aristocracy are so indifferent about their "illustrious" ancestors! In Luke, c. xxii., v.

36, Christ gives the following command to his peaceable dupes—a command which may suit the taste of the “Iron Duke,”—“But now he that hath a purse, let him take it; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one!” In John, c. xv., v. 6, he *charitably* exclaims, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is *withered*, and men gather them, and cast them into the *fire*, and they are *burned*.” Again, in Luke, c. xiv., v. 26, “If a man come to me and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” If this absurd and inhuman doctrine was followed, all domestic comfort and affection would be annihilated. For other passages relative to Christ; see Luke, c. xii., v. 49–51; Matt., c. x., v. 34, 35; Mark, c. xvi., v. 16; Mark, c. iv., v. 11, 12; Mark, c. xi., v. 1–3, which detail the affair of the colt—an act for which a man would now be transported, and twenty years ago hanged; Mark, c. ii., v. 23–26, which informs us of the depredations the disciples of Christ committed amongst the farmers’ corn, as they were passing by the way-side—(an act for which an individual would now be condemned for larceny) but which Christ, in opposition to the *dicta* of the learned judges of *this* age, pronounced innocent and commendable. Also Mark, c. v., v. 11, 12, and c. xi., v. 12–21. In these four latter references, Christ is represented either as taking or destroying other people’s property himself, or allowing his followers to do it; which, of course, coming from him, is eminently moral, and a fine precedent to the light-fingered gentry of this Christian land!

Paul, who, after the death of Christ, was the main champion of Christianity, unblushingly declares in his 2d Epistle to Cor., c. xi., v. 8, “I *robbed* other churches to do ye service.” In Rom., c. iii., v. 7, he exclaims, “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my *LIE* unto his glory, why yet am I also

judged as a sinner?" In 2d Cor., c. xii., v. 16, he says, "Being crafty, I caught you with *GUILE*." How honest! How honorable! In Gal., c. i., v. 9, he propounds the following monstrous doctrine:—"As we said before, so say I now again, if any men preach any other doctrine unto you, than that ye have received, let him be *accursed*." Excellent morality!—so excellent, that were it generally practised, the world would become a scene of moral strife and enmity.

Peter's denial of his Master, Luke, c. xxii., v. 54–58, is of a like character to Abraham's and Isaac's denial of their wives; and were *their* example followed, all truth and sincerity would be destroyed. I shall say little at this moment of Peter, deliberately drawing the sword, and cutting off the right ear of the priest's servant; John, c. xviii., v. 10. The act is so flagrantly cruel and unjust, that were it defended for a moment, no one's life would be safe in a Christian country. Every desperado might indulge in his atrocities with impunity. Nor need I enlarge on the blackguardism of Peter—his "cursing and swearing" recorded in Matt., c. xxvi., v. 74. Blasphemy in a Christian apostle is passed over in silence.

John, in his second Epistle, c. i., v. 10, gives the following truly *Christian* injunction:—"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house; neither bid him God speed." Were John's admonitions strictly obeyed, the world would become an arena of the most relentless intolerance and inhumanity. All the most delightful ties which bind civilized society, hospitality, courtesy, personal respect, social intercourse, would be dissevered, and man would be left to grovel in bigotry and dogmatism. Yet the men who enunciate such doctrines, are those whom we are trained to admire, revere, and almost deify. How infamous! Were we to take the Bible prodigies as our models, instead of our advancing in toleration, humanity, and enlightenment, we

should soon retrograde to a state of brutality and barbarism.

Those names upon whom I have been expatiating, are the "elite" of the Bible, the "literati," the "favored few" with whom the Deity would alone have any association.

What a contrast to the character of those illustrious men of ancient times, who knew not the "blessings of the Divine Word"—to our Socrates, Thales, Xenophon, Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, Aristides, Phocian, Cicero, Pliny, Seneca, and a phalanx of other wise and good men, compared with whom the Scriptural heroes shrivel into nothingness! O! talk not to me of the *morality* of the Bible, in the presence of such glorious names!

We will, therefore, proceed with our subject. We have still a great task to perform, and little time left to complete it. My remarks will, necessarily, be very summary. I hasten to refer you to passages which incite to the commission of various crimes.

Drunkenness. In Jeremiah, c. xxv., v. 27, it says, "Therefore, thou shalt say unto them, *drink* ye, and be *drunken*, and *spue*, and *fall down*, and *rise no more*, because of the sword which I will send amongst you." In Deut., c. xiv., v. 26, we are presented with a specimen of latitudinarianism, highly palatable to an anti-teetotaler—"And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or whatsoever thy soul desireth."

Robbery. See the case of Paul, as previously quoted; also, Exod., c. iii., v. 21, 22, where the Lord states, "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when you go away, ye shall not go empty. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters, and ye shall spoil the

Egyptians." What a virtuous scene society would become if that example was followed! If every Englishman and Irishman in the "land o' cakes," on leaving the country, were to adopt this practice, the "cannie Scotchman" would both look and feel most "unutterable things." For other examples, see 1 Cor., c. x., v. 24.

Vagabondism. In Psalms, cix., v. 10, it says, "Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg;" individuals, who, in this Christian country, are now treated as criminals.

Bigamy. See Deut., c. xxi., v. 15—17. The passage is not fit to quote. See, also, the "illustrious" instance of Solomon, 1 Kings, c. xi., v. 3. A more unblushing case of bigamy cannot be cited than this admired Bible-hero. Seven hundred wives! But he had three hundred concubines to boot! And this is the "wisest man" of whom the Bible-readers can boast. I admire their taste!"

Prostitution. See Hosea, c. i., v. 2, and Judges, c. xxi., v. 12. These passages are only fit for a Christian to quote. I will read you, however, the following example from Numb., c. xxi., v. 17, 18:—"Now, therefore, (says Moses) *kill* every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man, by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves!" What generous prudence!

Adultery. This crime the "Lord" threatened the Babylonians their wives should suffer. "Their children (says he, in Isaiah, c. xiii., v. 16,) shall be dashed to pieces, their houses shall be spoiled, and their *wives ravished.*" What a threat! See also Matt., c. i., v. 18.

I find some curious doctrines upon the subject of *Marriage*, which I will here introduce. I commend them to the consideration of Dr. Wardlaw. I advise him to issue an appendix to his new work on Prostitution, and amongst writings which he mentions as

inculcating lax notions upon this subject, to include "the Holy Bible." I will refer you in the first place to Deut., c. xxi., v. 10-14. The language is too objectionable to quote. I may state that if we were to practice the license therein granted, a man might change his wife every MONTH. I will next refer you to Deut., c. xxiv., v. 1, 2. We are there told that "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let *him* (the man himself) write her a bill of divorcement, and give it into her hand, and send her out of his house: and when she hath departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife!" This extract needs no comment.

Degradation and Enslavement of Women. The Bible, and more especially the *New Testament*, abounds in passages in contempt of the gentler sex. Paul says, in 1 Tim., c. ii., v. 11, "Let the women learn *in silence* with all *subjection*;" and in 1 Cor., c. xiv., v. 34, 35, he exclaims, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto *them* to speak; but they are *commanded* to be under *obedience*, as also saith the *law*. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a SHAME for women to speak in the church." See also 1 Tim. c. ii., v. 12; and Eph., c. v., v. 22, 23.

Slavery and the Slave Trade. In support of that monstrous system, I could quote many passages from this book. In Lev., c. xxv., v. 44-46, I read, "Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, *which thou shalt have*, shall be of the *heathen* that are round about you, of them shall ye *BUY* bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye *buy*, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land, *and they shall be your POSSESSION*. And ye shall take them as an *inheritance* for your children after you—to inherit them for a *possession*, they shall be

your bondmen *forever!*" What an iniquitous traffic in human life! See also Joshua, c. ix., v. 21, and Joel, c. iii., v. 8, where the "Lord" exclaims, "And I will *sell* your *sons* and your *daughters*, into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall *sell* them to the Sabeans to a people afar off; for the LORD hath spoken it." The American parsons may well say that the Bible sanctions slavery!

Apology for tyranny and oppression. In Heb., c. xiii., v. 17, we are told, explicitly, to "obey them that rule over you, and *submit* yourselves;" and in 1 Peter, c. ii., v. 13, we are commanded to "*Submit* yourselves to *every* ordinance of man for the LORD's sake." A most convenient doctrine to all tyrants and usurpers! The same audacious priest thus commands us in v. 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters, with all *fear*, not only to the *good* and the *gentle*, but to the *froward!*" But these are modest, compared with the following language of Paul: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, *for there is no power but of God*—the powers that be are *ordained of God*; whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive *damnation!*" Rom., c. xiii., v. 1-3. What a doctrine! How like the Bible! For other passages, see Titus, c. ii., v. 9, and Hosea, c. xii., v. 7.

Discouragement of virtue. "Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise, why shouldst thou destroy thyself?" Eccles., c. vii., v. 16. In Rev., c. xxii., v. 11, it is stated, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still." That is the doctrine of finality with a vengeance.

Encouragement of ignorance and error. Paul, in 1 Cor., c. xiv., v. 38, writes, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." And in c. i., v. 27, he says, "But *God* hath chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the *wise.*" In Isa., c. vi., v. 10,

it is ordered, "Make the heart of this people *fat*, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." See also c. lxiii., v. 17; and Exod., c. xix., v. 12, 13.

Encouragement to Lying and Falsehood. In 2 Thess. c. ii., v. 11, we are told, "And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a LIE." And in 2d Chron., c. xviii., v. 21, the Lord is represented as saying, "I will go out and be a *lying* spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." Ezek., c. xx., v. 25, informs us that the Lord set a very *good* example to the world, for we are told that he "gave them statutes that were *not good*, and judgments whereby they should not live." See, likewise, Gen., c. xxvii., v. 19; c. xxviii., v. 13—15; c. xxvi, v. 7—12; Jer., c. xx., v. 17; and Ezek., xiv., v. 9.

Encouragement to Hypocrisy, and an exquisite specimen of morality it is. In 1 Sam., c. xvi., v. 1, 2, we read, "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go. I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king from among his sons. And Samuel said, how can I go? If Saul hear me, he will kill me. And the Lord said, take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord."

Breach of Faith. In Num., c. xiv., v. 30—34, the Lord observes, "Doubtless, ye shall not come into the land, concerning which *I swore to make you dwell therein*, save Caleb, the son of Jephannah, and Joshua, the son of Nun, after the number of the days, in which ye searched the land, and forty days, each day for a year, shall be your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know *my breach of promise!!*" What a glorious specimen of honesty and good faith!

Primogeniture. This most unjust and pernicious law is strictly enforced, in Deut., c. xxi., v. 17, "But

he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a *double* portion of all that he hath, for he is the beginning of his strength, the right of the first-born is his." For other instances, see Gen., c. xvii., v. 14; 1 Sam., c. vi., v. 1—21; 2 Sam., c. xxi., v. 1—14; and Gen., c. iv., v. 15.

Persecution. If there be one thing more unjust or more *immoral* than another, it is persecuting a fellow being, because he may differ with you in opinion. To invade the precincts of conscience, is a most brutal act, and yet how often is it recommended in the Bible! In Deut., c. xiii., v. 6—9, one of the most diabolical commands ever given, is in reference to persecution for opinion. We are told, "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee, secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy father, Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, *neither shalt thine eye pity him*, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, *but thou shalt kill him*, thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to *death*, and afterwards the hand of all the people!!!" Here we are actually commanded to MURDER our own *sons, wives, and daughters*, if they will not believe as we believe! I tremble with horror. Christians! can you read such a passage, and not blush? Josh., c. xxiv., v. 20, protests, that if the Israelites *dared* to worship other gods than were proposed to them, the Lord would "*consume*" them! O! what "liberty of conscience," what "right of private judgment!" Many horrible passages, highly characteristic, might be quoted from Deut., c. xvii., v. 2.; Exod., c. xxxii., v. 10; 2 Chron., c. xxviii., v. 6; c. xv., v. 13; Deut., c. xiii., v. 6—13; 2 Kings, c. x., v. 29; and Deut., c. xvii., v. 12. In the New Testament, there are many passages, some of which I have read when speaking of Christ, Paul, and John, as given in Luke, c. xix., v. 27; Gal., c. i., v. 9; and 2 John, c.

i., v. 10. See, also, Mark, c. xvi., v. 16; 1 Cor., c. xvi., v. 22; Titus, c. iii., v. 10; Acts, c. xiii., v. 8—11; Gal., c. v., v. 12; Matt., c. xii., v. 30; Acts, c. iii., v. 23; and Luke, xiv., v. 23. The following passages, Matthew, c. x., v. 14, is the essence of intolerance;—“And whosoever,” says Christ, “shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city!” How horrible! In Acts, c. iii., v. 23, we are told, “and it shall come to pass, that every soul which shall not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” What Christian charity!

Suicide recommended. In Prov., c. xxiii., v. 1, 2, we read, “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee. *And put a knife to thy throat*, if thou be a man given to appetite.”

Assassination countenanced. In Judges, c. iii., v. 15—23, a most revolting story is told of the assassination of Eglon, king of Moab, by Ehud, the deliverer of the Israelites; and this “deliverer” we are informed, was selected and appointed by the “Lord” himself. I forbear quoting the passage. In c. iv., v. 21, a similar crime is committed by the woman, Jael, upon Sisera, the captain of the army of the king of Canaan. While asleep, says the story, she “took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground!”

After this, we are assured “the land of the children of Israel prospered!”

Murder. This is the most heinous of crimes, but nevertheless it is defended in the Bible. Listen, I entreat you, to the following astounding passage, 2 Kings, c. x., v. 11—30: “So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab, in Jezreel, and all his great men and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he

left him none remaining. And the Lord said unto Jehu, because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab, according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel!" A murderer made a king, because he was a murderer—because such an act was "right." O! could crime be more aggravated, or defended more unblushingly? Aye, even so, for in Jer., c. xlviii., v. 10, a man is not merely rewarded for committing murder, as in the above instance, but he is actually cursed if he will not do it. "Cursed be he," says the passage, "that keepeth back his sword from blood." O! what humanity! what morality!

I will here draw a veil over this frightful picture. To expose it further, would be painful both to you and to me. Unpleasant, indeed, has been my task on this occasion. Never was it my misfortune to wade through such a mass of crime, obscenity, and butchery, as I was constrained to do in compiling this address. To call a book divine, which contains such atrocities, *and which countenances and encourages them too*, is to afford an apology for all that is iniquitous, cruel, and demoralizing, and, were its injunctions strictly practised, the world would become obscured in moral and intellectual darkness—the glorious tide of human amelioration would be corrupted, and everything that was virtuous and good would wither and die!

To confirm the statements made in the preceding lecture, I beg to supply the reader with a few specimens of the *obscenities* of the Bible. For more particulars, see "The Holy Scriptures Analysed," previously referred to.

"My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh. My lovers and my friends, stand aloof from my sore,

and my kinsmen stand afar off." So says the virtuous David, Psalms, c. xxxviii., v. 5-11.

"Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin; from time to time thou shalt drink. And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man in their sight," Ezek, c. iv., v. 11.

"So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house, and Absalom went in unto his father's concubine in the sight of all Israel," 2 Sam., c. xvi., v. 22.

"And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his, and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed unto his brother," Gen., c. xxxviii., v. 9. "He moveth his tail like a cedar, the sinews of his stones are wrapped together, Job., c. xl., v. 17. "But Rahshaketh said unto them, hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee, to speak these words; hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own **** and drink their own ****?" 2 Kings, c. xviii., v. 27.

"We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind," Isa., c. xxvi., v. 18.

"And Ehud put forth his right hand, and took the dagger from his right side, and thrust it into his belly, and the haft also went after the blade and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly, and the dirt came out," Judges, c. iii., v. 21, 22.

"He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord," Deut., c. xxiii., v. 1.

"And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon, and it shall be when thou wilt ease thyself, thou

shalt dig, and cover that which cometh from thee," Deut., c. xxiii., v. 13.

"Then shall his brother's wife come unto him, in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoes from off his feet, and spit in his face," Deut., c. xxv., v. 9.

"Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the token of the damsel's virginity, unto the elders of the city in the gate," Deut., c. xxii., v. 15.

"And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even," Lev., c. xv. v. 16.

"Neither shall he go into any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or for his mother," Lev., c. xxi., v. 11.

Can such language (and it is only a sample,) be written by inspiration of God? It is truly monstrous that the sons and daughters of a civilized country should be trained to revere a book in which such beastialities are found. When will the Christian learn good-breeding, if not good sense?

LECTURE ELEVENTH.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BIBLE.

FRIENDS—

I ANNOUNCED that this evening we should consider the *Philosophy* of the Bible. I candidly acknowledge I apply the term philosophy, in relation to this book, *derisively*. I cannot use it otherwise.

To talk of the Philosophy of the Bible, in a serious tone, and in earnest, would be truly comical.

The Bible is a book of mysteries, incongruities, obscenities, absurdities, and atrocities, but not of science and philosophy. For its *bulk* (and, if that be an argument in favor of its divinity, it is rather a *solid* one,) there is no book extant which has less to do with the latter kind of questions. Recording and detailing all degrees of crimes and vices—butcheries and machinations—intrigues and impostures—is the *forte* of the Bible. In *that* it quite excels; but when it attempts the scientific, the philosophic, or the rational, it seems like a fish out of water—quite away from its natural element. Some theologians in the plenitude of their simplicity have ventured to boast of the *learning* of the Bible, and pompously pronounced it to be the most “learned” book in the world. If it be, I apprehend it is only in the sense in which some of our professors are learned—“learnedly ignorant.” However, if it can justly claim so distinguished an appellation, then the works of Jack

and the Giant Killer, Tom Thumb, Mother Bunch, The Seven Champions of Christendom, Cinderella and the Glass Slipper, Baron Munchausen, Little Red Riding Hood, Babes in the Woods, and other nursery stories, may take their place among the *scientific* productions of the age, and the writings of a Lawrence, an Arago, and a Herschell may be put upon the shelf as fit only to amuse infants; for certainly, the stories of Jacob's Ladder, Baalam and his Ass, Joshua and the Sun, Elijah and his Journey to Heaven, Lot's Wife and the Pillar of Salt, Aaron and his Rod, Samson and his Jaw-bone of an Ass, David and his Achievements upon the "light fantastic toe," and Jonah and the Fish, are much more *learned* productions than any detailed in the works here enumerated, and exhibit, I doubt not, a more intimate acquaintance with the *scientific* and the *philosophical*!

Of course, the Bible being the most learned book in our literature, those individuals, who are alleged to have written it, must have been very *learned* men. There is no doubt of it. Moses, for instance, who is the first erudite author of the Bible, was such a very *enlightened* man that he thought nothing of commanding a few thousands of men, women, and children to be massacred in cold blood; and, so *modest* was he in his enlightenment, that he even *condescended* to murder a fellow being with his own hand. Joshua, the next writer in the Bible, was a man of such extraordinary attainments, especially in the science of *astronomy*, that he even commanded the sun to stand still, when it did stand still. Samuel, another *inspired* author, was a man of such science, more particularly in *practical anatomy*, that we are told he "hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal," in the most skilful style. David, another Bible author, so grave and rigid a philosopher was he, that we read of his "dancing before the Lord with all his might." Solomon's wisdom was so transcendental, that we are informed, he maintained

a retinue of seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and at last, declared, as a proof of the *advantages* of *philosophy*, that all was "vanity." Daniel, another very distinguished writer, was so well acquainted with *natural history*, that he could live among lions, with as much impunity, as we do among butterflies. Jonah, who was also an inspired penman, and a *prophet* to boot, was so thoroughly familiar with the *rationale* of *animal physiology*, that he could get down a fish's throat, with as much ease and safety, as an animacule would down that of our own. Paul, the leading author of the *doctrinal* portion of the New Testament, had such a great thirst for knowledge, that he exclaims, "if a man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," and so intense an anxiety for the progress of science and philosophy generally, that he wisely remarks, "Beware, lest any man spoil you through *philosophy*."

There is no question all these *eminent* authors are *very* "learned" men, and great promoters of the "arts and sciences." The world is highly indebted to them in that respect!

But, my friends, lest any one may imagine that I intend on this occasion to indulge merely in sarcastic ridicule, or idle banter, we will endeavor to be somewhat serious upon this subject. We will ask, then, *where is the learning of the Bible?* Where the useful scientific principles it has elaborated and established? Where the great truths of philosophy, which it may have developed and demonstrated? What little, indeed, is advanced upon these questions, involves errors and absurdities, which modern science has completely exploded. I am not aware that there is any other volume in existence, in which more *blunders* could be detected than in the Bible, and to designate its authors *inspired* and *infallible*, is to reverse our ideas of truth and falsehood, fallibility and infallibility. It shall be our province on the present occasion to expose a few of these blunders, and to

show how utterly unworthy is the Bible of being esteemed a learned or philosophical production.

We will "begin with the beginning"—*The Creation of the World*.

Christians maintain that according to the Philosophy of the Bible, this event transpired only some 6000 years ago. There are, however, a multitude of circumstances, which tend to invalidate that position. I cannot pretend, in one brief address, to comment upon them all. I shall be under the necessity of cursorily reviewing a few only of the more remarkable. First, then, of the records of other nations. The Old Testament, you are aware, is put forth as the record of the *Jews*, and it is upon this record, that the Christian world base their cosmogony. Now, if the records of one nation are competent authority upon the question at issue, the records of another are equally legitimate. We have just as much right to believe *them* as the Jews: nay, more, for the Jews were the most ignorant and barbarous of all the great nations of antiquity, and, therefore, the least likely to be familiar with the subject before us. The Chinese, than whom few of the ancient empires of the world were more enlightened or civilized, have a collection of books, consisting of 150 volumes, called the "Great Annals," which pretend to give a history from the creation of the world, comprising a period of above 49,000 years, *after* which thirty-five imperial families reigned successively for *ages*, without any interruption. Some writers have ventured to doubt the authenticity of these productions, but upon much less reasonable ground than we may doubt the authenticity of the Jewish annals. Certain we are, that the Chinese invented a cycle or computation of time which begins *two thousand six hundred* years before ours.

Sir R. Phillips informs us, in his "Million of Facts," that the Hindoo priesthood (and their testimony is as good as the Jewish priesthood,) "claims

a theological time of nearly *two thousand millions* of years since the beginning, and they state that Brahma—the Hindoo God—was seventeen millions of years *creating*.” He further remarks, “The Hindoos begin the creation as a mere *astronomical* epoch, when all the planets were in Aries, or nearly *two millions of years* since, and, taking in the nodes and apsides, they extend it to *four thousand three hundred and twenty millions*, which they call a Calpha, or day of Brahma.”

Pomponius Mela, the great Egyptian historian, informs us that the Egyptians in their annals, reckoned three hundred and thirty kings extending through a period of *thirteen thousand* years, and Herodotus gives a statement of the Egyptians, which carries the antiquity of the world still further. Herodotus states that the reign of their kings extended through a period of *seventeen thousand* years. Sir R. Phillips observes that “the Egyptians reckoned *fourteen thousand* years to the age of their original Vulcan, and *ten thousand* years before Menas and Sethen.” Sir Richard, indeed, expressly declares, that “the Chinese, Japanese, Hindoos and Chaldeans claim an infinite antiquity.” So also did the *Greek* schools more than *two thousand five hundred* years ago. Plato, who wrote *two thousand two hundred* years since, states that the great island of Atalantis, filled with cities, &c., was absorbed by the ocean *nine thousand* years before his time. Calisthenes, a Grecian philosopher of high renown, says he was told by Berosus, the historian of Babylon, who was in that city when Alexander visited it, that *four hundred and two thousand* years before his time “the axis of the earth was parallel to the plane of the ecliptic.”

But, we will take our stand on higher ground than records and traditions. We will base our objections to the Bible cosmogony, upon something more palpal and demonstrable than the pretensions of priests. We will take our arguments from the incontestable evidences of science.

The discoveries effected during this last century in geology, chemistry, and astronomy, prove most unanswerably, not only that the creation did *not* take place at so comparatively recent a period, but that there *never could have been such a creation at all*, as the one detailed in the writings attributed to Moses; that, in fact, such a thing as *absolute creation* or *absolute destruction* is an impossibility and an absurdity. The fundamental principles of geological science, as developed by Lyell, Mantell, Phillips, and others, show, that this globe, so far from being only some *six thousand* years old, is of incalculable antiquity. It must have taken millions of years to have accomplished the various changes which the earth has undergone. Sir R. Phillips remarks, "thousands of years must have elapsed between each of the numerous formations which it discovers." "Geology, then," says Dr. Mantell, in his *Wonders of Geology*, "does not affect to disclose the first creation of animated nature; *it does not venture to assume that we have evidence of a BEGINNING*, but it unfolds to us a succession of events, *each* so vast as to be beyond our finite comprehension." An idea may be formed of the time required to bring about the various revolutions which have occurred in the strata of the earth, from the fact that the sea shoals but about an inch in a century.

The science of chemistry teaches that there is not a single atom of matter which can be either created or destroyed; that it can only experience a change, and that the whole substance of the universe is continually and gradually undergoing composition, decomposition, and re-composition, and that, therefore, the idea of the world having been created—created out of nothing, too, as taught in the Bible, is absurd and impossible. We are told, in this *learned* book, that the universe was at one time "without form and void," or, in other words, a non-entity, for that which is "without form and void," must necessarily

be non-existent. Science, however, has utterly exploded such a preposterous notion. Chemistry has triumphantly established the indestructibility and consequent eternity of matter. An able American author observes, "The eternal duration of the earth in some form or other is rendered certain, by the essential properties of matter; *whatever does exist*, must have existed from all eternity, and from its very nature, continue to exist forever." Sir John Herschell, unquestionably the greatest natural philosopher of the age, in his Discourses on Natural Philosophy, has most beautifully, and clearly, demonstrated the fundamental truth of chemical science. He says, "The researches of chemists have shown that what the vulgar call corruption, destruction, &c., is nothing but a change of arrangement of the same ingredient elements—the disposition of the same materials into other forms, *without the loss or actual destruction* of a single atom, and thus any doubts on the permanence of the natural laws are discountenanced, and the whole weight of appearances thrown into the opposite scale." Sir John continues, "One of the most obvious cases of apparent destruction, is, when anything is ground to dust and scattered, as they may be, they must fall somewhere and continue, if only as ingredients of the soil, to perform their humble, but useful part in the economy of nature. The destruction produced by fire is more striking in many cases, as in the burning of a piece of charcoal or a taper, there is no smoke, nothing visibly dissipated or carried away, the burning body wastes and disappears, while nothing seems to be produced but warmth and light, which we are not in the habit of considering as substances; and, when all has disappeared, except, perhaps, some trifling ashes, we naturally enough suppose that it is gone, lost, destroyed. But, when the question is examined more exactly, we detect in the invisible stream of heated air, which ascends from the glowing coal or heated wax, the

whole ponderable matter only united in a new combination with the *air*, and dissolved in it. Yet, so far from being thereby *destroyed*, it is only become again what it was *before* it existed in the form of charcoal or wax, an active agent in the business of the world, and a main support of animal and vegetable life, and is still susceptible of running again and again the same round, as circumstances may determine, so that, for aught we can see to the contrary, the same identical atom may lay concealed for thousands of centuries in a limestone rock—may, at length, be quarried, set free in the lime kiln, mix with the air, be absorbed from it by plants, and, in succession, becomes a part of the frames of myriads of living beings, till some occurrence of events consigns it *once more* to a long repose, which, however, no way unfits it for again resuming its former activity.”

The science of astronomy affords the most indubitable evidence against the Mosaic Cosmogony. This science propounds that the solar system, said to have been manufactured on the fourth day of the Bible creation, has existed for a period extending infinitely beyond the calculation, or even conception of man.

Its formation too, so far from being instantaneous, as stated in Genesis, must have been imperceptibly slow and gradual. Dr. Nicholl, one of the leading astronomers of the day, in his “Phenomena of the Solar System” remarks, that “astronomy explains that the solar system once existed, as a diffused nebula, which, passing through various states of condensation, formed a central luminary, and its attendant planets.” Sir John Herschell has discovered that the various constellations are surrounded by nebulous stars in various stages of progress, from thin, shapeless masses of highly transparent matter, to stars almost opaque. From these evidences he infers that *all* the stars have gone through this progress, growing more opaque as they become older; and, that, at last, having attained a certain opacity, they will decay,

and slowly and gradually be resolved into chaotic matter, similar to the former state, when they will *again*, in the same *slow* and *gradual* manner, assume a planetary being. These facts, I hold, resting upon such high authority, completely demolish the philosophy of the Bible.

Again: According to the Genesis creation, we must believe that this earth is the principal body in the universe—that the sun, moon, and stars, were just hung up in space as a chandelier, to throw light upon the inhabitants of this contemptible speck. Now, astronomy elucidates, that this earth is secondary to, *and dependent upon* the *sun*, and that *Jupiter*, *Saturn*, and *Uranus*, are much more powerful planets than our own—Jupiter being eleven times larger, Saturn ten, and Uranus four and a half.

As to the *stars*, of which the Bible story speaks so contemptuously, as if they were only so many tiny rushlights to direct us during the night, astronomy shows that they are themselves suns—centres of other systems—luminaries of other worlds.

In this *learned* book we detect similar blunders connected with the *creation*, but time will not admit of my alluding to them all. I may just observe, that we are informed the Lord divided light from darkness, three days *before* there could be *any* light, if the sciences of optics and astronomy are to be accredited.—It is said that the sun, from which our light proceeds, was not created until the *fourth* day, yet the Lord divided light from the darkness on the *first* day. This, at once, proves the utter ignorance of the Bible editors of science or philosophy. But the idea of *dividing* light from darkness, adds still further to the absurdity. They cannot be divided, as darkness is only the *privation* of light. Again: Astronomy teaches that it is *by* the sun and moon we measure time—days, months, years, &c.; and yet, as above stated, there were *three* days before either of these celestial bodies were created!

A most *learned* book this, indeed! We are also informed, that on the *second* day the Lord *divided the universe* into two parts, the “firmament,” and that this above partition was called *heaven*, and beneath, *earth*. Astronomy, however, has also upset this absurdity. That science demonstrates that there can be no such partition dividing space, but the universe is an endless series of worlds, all revolving in their respective spheres; and that such a thing as absolute above and below, as applied to the universe, is a mere illusion.

But is it not a strange circumstance, that the Bible God should require *five days* to manufacture a small speck like our globe, and then create *millions* of other worlds, *each of them* so immeasurably larger than our own, and all in *one* day? This fact alone shows the utter absurdity of the Bible story. Some individuals, the most distinguished of whom is Dr. Buckland, seeing the utter inconsistency of modern science with the Mosaic account of the creation, have endeavored to give a different interpretation to that silly story, than the one hitherto promulgated.

They say, a *day* in the *creation* was not one of *our* days, but a period involving *thousands of years*.

My friends, such gross perversion of language as this interpretation implies, is only worthy of a priest. Not only does the language itself not admit of such interpretation, but other collateral circumstances connected with the Bible, conclusively proves its utter absurdity. The Jews themselves, from whom the book emanates, evidently used the word in the ordinary sense; hence, their institution of the Sabbath. The Lord says, they rested on the seventh day; therefore, we ought to rest on that day. He kept it holy, therefore we must. If, however, the Jewish and Christian world, up to the present period, have been in error upon this subject—if it be a fact that the institution of the Sabbath is based upon an illusion, then our “houses of God” may be closed not only on the sixth,

but on the seventh day of the week, and "the gentlemen of the cloth" may earn their "bread" by the "sweat of their brow." O! what an awkward mistake, Dr. Buckland! How unfortunate that you did not discover in the depth of your sagacity, that if the Christian world were to become Bucklandites, and act consistently with their "philosophy," that, like Othello, *your* "occupation would be gone!" To clear yourself from one dilemma, you have fallen into another infinitely worse. What does the pious Sir Andrew Agnew say upon this point? His labors will be superseded if you speak the truth. In respect to the *learned* story of the *creation and fall of man*, I deem it almost too contemptible to refer to. The idea of *man* having been made out of the *dust* of the ground, rolled together like a snow-ball, and then inflated with the breath of life, as Mr. Green would inflate his balloon — and of women being subsequently manufactured out of one of the man's *ribs*, is fit only for an age of barbarism. The individual who could acknowledge a story so exquisitely ridiculous, must be endowed with a most inordinate relish for the "marvellous." He would believe that the moon was made of green cheese, if the Bible only said so.

A question, however, arises out of this tale, which is of some moment. Its consideration will enable me to show the ignorance of the Bible writers upon two other leading sciences, physiology and comparative anatomy. According to this account, we ought to believe that the whole of the human species originated from Adam and Eve. Science, however, commands us to believe otherwise. It has been discovered, through the observations and researches of Buffon, Blumenbach, Cuvier, Fleuren, and other physiologists and naturalists, that the human species are divided into different races, which Blumenbach classifies as follows:—The Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopic, American, and Malay varieties. M. Fleuren, a most distinguished naturalist, maintains that the difference of

structure between the white and colored races, is sufficient to prove that they are of different stocks, or, as he expresses it, of "essentially distinct races." This difference lies principally in the structure of the skin, which he shows is not the same in the white as in the colored man. In the case of Europeans, tinged by exposure to the sun's rays, the mucous web is what is affected, becoming, as it were, slightly colored. No degree of exposure can, he thinks, confer the coloring layers of the Negro and other dark races.—He remarks, that the "African Moors who have lived beside the Negroes for centuries, have never acquired the coloring apparatus of that race; and it has been observed by travellers, (Captain Lyon among others,) that the Isuricks, a race of African Caucasians, of a dark brown complexion, are nearly as white on these parts of their bodies covered up from the sun, as most Europeans. It is also well known, that the progeny of an European, however much he might have been tinged by the sun, is, invariably, as white as he himself was at first. The black races are localized in the warmest regions of the globe, and their skin and general constitution, seem adapted for their allotment. A black man can lie naked, exposed to the hottest sun, without injury, while the skin of the white man, if exposed to similar heat, breaks out in blisters. The black man can labor under a burning sun with impunity, but the white man sinks under exertion made in such circumstances." From these and many other facts, which I have not time to enumerate, M. Fleuren infers that there is a constitutional and distinct difference between the various races of mankind, which prove that they must have originally sprung from perfectly separate stocks; and if so, the story of Adam and Eve being the parent of the human race, is like the rest of the Bible philosophy — nonsense. Chambers observes, upon this subject: "In former times, when only two varieties, the white and the black, were recognized or thought of, it was supposed that

complexion was simply a result of the actions of the sun's rays. This idea would naturally arise from its being observed that exposure to the sun, darkened a white person, while seclusion tended to bleach or whiten him, and that the black nations were chiefly those who occupied tropical countries, while the whites were placed in the temperate zone. The Greeks, who never doubted that they were the perfection and standard of human nature, and who entertained exaggerated notions of the heat of the African sun, were strongly impressed with the idea, that the Negro nations had been originally white, and had been changed into black by the action of the solar rays. This notion continued to be set forward, undoubtedly, by uaturalists, down to the time of Buffon, and is still the belief of the ignorant in most countries."

In the story of the fall of man, it is stated that the Serpent was afflicted with the curse of going upon its belly. This evinces the grossest ignorance of the nature of that unfortunate reptile. It is evidently constructed by nature, so as to move in that position, and to call it a curse to make it go in that manner, is a misnomer. But, pray, if it did not always go on its belly, how might it exert locomotion, before it incurred the "divine displeasure?" Upon its head or its tail? Truly, there must have been some natural curiosities in the antideluvian world!

I must now remark upon the next evidence of the great *learning* of the Bible—the *Deluge*. My observations must necessarily be brief, as I have other matters to consider ere I retire. In Genesis, c. vi., and vii., we read that a few thousand years ago, there was a *universal deluge*, every living thing, except Noah and his family, and a pair of each race of animated existences; they being saved in a wooden box, called an *ark*, which floated upon the waters, and which were so deep, that they covered the *highest* mountains. This absurd story is inconsistent in the first place with the fundamental principles of

natural philosophy. According to the law of fluids it would have been physically impossible for the *whole* globe to be inundated *at one and the same time*. Such an idea, indeed, exhibits little acquaintance with the principles of attraction and gravitation. But if this could occur, we learn from the philosophy of the tides, that through the influence of the moon upon the surface of this planet, there is a continued ebbing and flowing of the ocean, to the extent of twelve or fifteen feet every twelve hours. Now, if the whole earth was under water, and to the depth of the highest mountains, the agitation of that immense ocean must be so tremendous, that it would be impossible for any body to float upon its surface. Everything would be engulfed in the foaming billows. Nothing could resist it. The ark, had it been a thousand times the size, would have been dashed to pieces, and its inmates annihilated.

But, where was the immense supply of water to come from necessary to deluge the *world*, and to "cover the highest mountains?" The Andes are stated to be 20,000 feet above the level of the sea, and it has been calculated, that the weight of the atmosphere, with all its vapors, is equal to no more than a hollow sphere of about thirty feet of thickness, environing the whole globe; and, consequently, the whole of its contents, if condensed into water, could not deluge the earth to the height of an ordinary house.

Let us now speak of the Ark itself. According to the Bible description, it was only 300 cubits long, or about 525 feet; 50 cubits, or 87 1-2 feet broad; and 30 cubits, or 52 1-2 feet high. It is manifest that a vessel, of such limited dimensions, could not contain a thousandth part of what must have been stowed into it to include Noah and his children, and a male and female of all living things, together with the food necessary to serve them for so long a period as five months. The writer of this marvellous story, ex-

hibits the deepest ignorance of the sciences of ornithology, entymology, natural history, chemistry, physiology, zoology, and natural philosophy. He could not have known that there are some millions of species of birds, beasts, and insects; and, as to the fishes, how could they be "drowned?" How could a "deluge" destroy them? A universal flood, instead of being a curse to that part of "living beings," would be a "god-send" — a universal feast. O! what sport for the sharks and the dolphins!

This learned writer was not aware that it would have been quite impossible for such an immense number of animals to exist for so long a period, without light or fresh air. - We are told there was only one window to the Ark, and that was shut for the whole of the 150 days. He must have been ignorant, too, of another physiological fact—that different degrees of temperature were necessary to support the various animals for any time. The climate which would suit one, would destroy another. But there is no mention of such an indispensable provision.

The fact is, the whole of this story, from the beginning to the end, is only a tissue of the most barbarous ignorance and stupidity.

Christians, themselves, are growing ashamed of it. Dr. Pye Smith, one of the most intelligent divines of the present day, admits, that "the flood could not be universal," nor could it have "resulted in the destruction of all animal life;" and, he further remarks, "connecting the question with physical causes, it appeared to him that unless we resorted to miraculous agency (against the gratuitous assumption of which he protested, as both unphilosophical and presumptuous) it was impossible to imagine the Ark capable of containing parts of all the animals whose existence must entirely depend on their exemption from inundation."

The learned doctor then proceeds to detail the great variety of species in the animal creation, and

to show the impossibility of stowing away in a wooden box, such an immense number of living beings.

Dr. Burnet, in the *Archeologiæ Philosophiæ*, c. iv., p. 40, says that the quantity of water it would take to cover the tops of the highest mountains, as stated in this story, "must at least exceed the magnitude of eight oceans." He further admits, "so great a quantity of water can no where be found, though we exhaust all the treasures of water in heaven or earth, and add besides the subterraneous water," and that, "howsoever, or from what place soever, this prodigious mass of water was brought upon the earth, *there could be no means of removing it*, or any possible method found out of taking away such a mighty heap of water." From these premises the learned Doctor concludes, "that our present earth was not subject to a deluge, nor is it capable of it by its shape or elevation."

The discoveries, however, of modern geologists, set the question of a universal deluge completely at rest. They incontrovertibly prove that the changes of the earth's surface have not been produced by a general flood, but by the *gradual* operation of *water* and *heat*. The marine shells found on the tops of mountains, and other elevated situations, have been forced there by igneous agency, and are not, as conjectured by theologians, the remains of Noah's flood. Time will not admit of my giving you any facts from that interesting science. I must leave the subject, by quoting the following words from the poet Coleridge. "I think it absurd," says he, in his "Table Talk," "to attribute so much to the deluge. An inundation, which left an olive-tree standing, and bore up the Ark peacefully on its bosom, could scarcely have been the sole cause of the rents and dislocations observable on the face of the earth."

We have reviewed that portion of this *learned* book which contains the cream of its "philosophy." There are numerous other passages, however, which

display the same lack of scientific information. I will refer you to a few of them. In 1 Kings, c. viii., v. 35, we read of "heaven being shut up," in order that there should be no rain. From this, and many similar passages, it is clear that the *learned* men who composed that eminently scientific production were perfectly unacquainted with the fact, that rain was produced by evaporation and condensation, but imagined that it came from some place *above*, the bottom of which, I suppose, was like a huge watering can, and whenever it suited the "Lord" he sprinkled us with a refreshing shower as a gardener would his flowers.

In Gen., c. i., v. 12, it is said, "Let the earth bring forth grass," &c. Now it would, at least, have been a little more rational, as well as "philosophical," to have made the earth produce "grass" after the creation of the sun instead of before it. In Gen., c. ix., v. 12, 13, we read, that the Lord, for the first time, hung a rainbow in the clouds as a sign of his covenant with the people after the deluge. The science of optics proves that the rainbow is but a natural phenomenon. It is merely the result of the refrangibility and reflexibility of the rays of light. It could not have been the first time a rainbow was produced, for so long as light and vapor existed such a phenomenon must have been produced. Either, therefore, this story is false, or else prior to the deluge there could have been no *light* or no *vapor*—in either of which cases, animal life would have been impossible.

In Genesis, c. xi., we are told of the building of the *Tower of Babel*, and the confusion of tongues. The Bible chronology places the building of this tower only 115 years after the destruction of mankind by the flood, and *even while Noah was yet alive*. How can these two stories be reconciled? It is said that there were only Noah and his family who survived the deluge. Could they have multiplied so rapidly, in that short time, as to populate a *city*, and erect such

an enormous tower ! It would have required an immense number of persons, with great scientific knowledge, (the result of long research,) to raise so lofty a pile. Its height was estimated at 81,000 feet, and it had a road-way on its outside, which went eight times around its ascent, so as to give the whole the appearance of eight towers one above another. It is perfectly ridiculous to suppose that such a prodigious work could have been entered upon, much less carried forward to the extent stated, at so early a date after the period we are told that there was *only* one family of human beings in existence ! Such a story is only worthy of the Bible. The greatest absurdity, however, is in supposing that God should be *afraid* that the people would *accomplish* their design of building a tower whose top should reach *heaven* ! Pray, to what point in the heavens did the builders of this tower intend going ? and how did they purpose to reach there ? If to the moon, as that is the *nearest* object in the heavens, it would have taken a builder, going at the rate of four miles an hour, night and day, without either sleep or refreshment, seven years to reach the destined point, with one single load of building materials ! If to the sun, at the same rate, it would take him 3,000 years to carry one load of lime. But if they were ambitious of going to the *first* fixed star, it would have taken, at that rate, 48 millions of years to reach it !! Why, if they had made the foundation of Babel one fourth of a square mile in circumference, and made *all the earth* into bricks and lime, they would have been little more than *half way* to the *first* fixed star, and the *next* fixed star is supposed to be as far behind the first as the first is from the earth ! But suppose all these difficulties surmounted, a new one would arise, when the builders approached so near the heavenly bodies as to feel more forcibly, than from the earth, the power of attraction. In this case, men, bricks, and mortar, with all their tools, and other materials, would fly off in a direct line to the moon, and

for ever prevent the completion of this wonderful project! The folly and impossibility of the thing stamp the whole story with a character which ought to make Christians ashamed of calling such nonsense the word of an "intelligent God."

The enlightened editors of this divine story must have known little of *moral philosophy*. To read the Bible, it would appear that the *heart* was the seat of volition and sensation. Esdras says, c. xiv., v. 40, "my heart uttered understanding." Innumerable other passages might be quoted. The discoveries, however, of Lawrence and Gall, in the sciences of Anatomy, Physiology, and Phrenology, establish that the *brain* is the seat of thought and sensation. None of the great naturalists of the last 100 years, Cuvier, Blumenbach, or Buffon, have taught such a notion as the one propounded in the Bible. It is deemed too absurd to notice.

In Genesis, c. vi., v. 4, we are informed that there were "*giants* in the earth in those days." Modern science has completely exploded that absurdity also.

The "philosophers" of the Bible differ very materially with the philosophers of this age, upon that most important of all sciences—*Education*. We are told, in Prov., c. x, v. 13, that a "*rod* is for the back of him that is *void of understanding*." It has been discovered, however, by Pestalozzi and other enlightened educationalists, that to follow the Bible philosophy would not only be inhuman but impolitic, and that mild and persuasive means are to be preferred to coercion or punishment. It is none but bigots who know nothing of the *science* of education, who resort to that absurd and severe treatment.

I shall here speak of that fatal absurdity, *Witchcraft*. In Exodus, c. xxii., v. 18, it is enjoined, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and in 1 Samuel, c. xxiii, v. 7, we read of that savage and cunning priest consulting the Witch of Endor. My friends, if there be one thing more than another which exposes the ig-

norance of the Bible writers, it is the institution of the law prohibiting witchcraft. There never was such a thing as a witch, no more than there have been ghosts or hobgoblins. All enlightened men now repudiate the idea as a mere imposition. Even the "vulgar" begin to laugh at it. Well had it been for mankind, if the delusion had ended in mere *belief*, but unfortunately, in consequence of the foolish and brutal injunction just read, thousands of our fellow beings have been murdered—murdered too, under the most humiliating and revolting circumstances. The follies and cruelties, indeed, committed through the influence of such writers as the Bible authors, are incalculable, and never will humanity become enlightened and good until the productions of such men are permanently and absolutely discarded.

It would be a pity to omit noticing the precious tale of Jonah and the whale, in this list of "inspired" absurdities. It is such a glorious specimen of the *learning* of the Bible, that it ought to receive honorable mention, and especially when we remember that the hero of the story was a *prophet*. In Jonah, c. i., v. 17, we are informed that this prophet-monger met with a singular misfortune. The account states that "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." This fish, Christ tells us, in Matt., c. xii., v. 40, (and I presume *he* will be a competent authority,) was a *whale*! Why this fish should have been selected more than any other for the domicile of the prophet, I know not, except it be, that because the whale is the *largest fish*, it was presumed that it would have the *largest throat*, and consequently the most convenient of access. Unluckily, however, modern anatomists have discovered, that though the animal is enormously large, its throat is exceedingly small—so small that it is not an inch and a half in diameter! How, therefore, the prophet Jonah, who might, probably, have been like some of our modern country rectors, of tolerable plumpness and rotundity,

succeeded in making his way through such a *capacious* aperture, would require a miracle to explain, and how he managed to live for three days in the whale's belly, when he *did get in*, would require a still greater miracle to elucidate! It is evident, that the author of this story labored under the vulgar mistake that the gullet of the whale would be commensurate with its general bulk—a mistake quite natural to a Bible editor.

Having proceeded thus far with our observations, we must draw to a close. Had time allowed, I should have been happy to have amused you with a critique upon the stories of Joshua and the Sun—Ezekiel and his *dinner*—there being no rain on the earth for *three years and six months*—stars falling from *heaven*—Christ and the fig-tree—and his visit with his “Satanic majesty” to the top of the mountain, whence he saw all the kingdoms of the world, which the science of astronomy shows, from the spherical form of the earth, to be impossible—Ezekiel and his being lifted up by a *lock of his hair* into the midst of the heavens—the angel receiving *wages* for his advice to the man Tobias—the ass and the lion *talking* with the “*man's* voice”—the “glorious times” mentioned in Exodus, when the Lord “rained BREAD from heaven,” and many other Biblical wonders. I will give you, however, one more specimen ere I conclude. It is Ezekiel's visit to the valley of bones. That learned prophet says, c. xxxvii., v. 1—10, “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. And again he said unto me, Prophesy unto these bones, and say unto them, O! ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and ye shall

live, and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath into you, and ye shall live, and know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and, as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them, above; but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army!!” This is something like a story. The lovers of the wonderful need not consult Baron Munchausen.

My friends, if such puerile rhapsodies, (and the Bible abounds in such passages,) are to be esteemed as philosophy, science, learning, then are the outpourings of fanaticism to be considered the only criteria of human enlightenment, and the deep, patient, and elaborate researches of the great and the wise, must be scouted as mere hallucinations.

In former lectures I felt it my duty to repudiate the Bible as a standard of consistency and morality.

I now deem it incumbent upon me to discard it as a standard of philosophy.

In this decision I am supported by evidence too incontrovertible to be refuted—too palpable to be denied. The science of Astronomy warrants me in repudiating it—Geology, Chemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Natural History, Phrenology, Natural Philosophy, all the various arts and sciences with which man is acquainted, warrant me in condemning it. Before such authority, this “learned” book must, ere long, hide its diminished head—sink to its own native littleness and absurdity, and never more involve humanity in error, mystery, crime, and delusion!

LECTURE TWELFTH.

INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON SOCIETY.

FRIENDS—

PURSUANT to the intimation given last Sunday evening, I purpose, in this address to consider *the Influence of the Bible on Society*. Having fully and conclusively disproved its divinity, we will trace the consequences which have followed a mistake so egregious and fatal.

We will commence our review with the Christian era. I should deem it a task alike unnecessary and melancholy to enter into the Jewish history. No enlightened and philanthropic mind can peruse its crimson pages without horror and disgust. Blood! blood! blood! is recorded on every leaf. The most obdurate and depraved heart must be sickened on reading the atrocities therein detailed—atrocities, said to have been performed in the “name of the Lord,” by his own “chosen people.” O! while the youth of our country are trained to ponder over such scenes of blood and carnage, society will always be cruel and demoralized. The spirit of love and virtue can never flourish amongst us, while that production sways the opinions and actions of mankind.

Had the priesthood of Christendom, assisted by his Satanic Majesty himself, endeavored to compose a book for the purpose of keeping the human race ignorant, credulous, superstitious, brutal, and wicked,

they could not have produced one better adapted for the purpose than the Old Testament.

It is, as I formerly observed, an *immoral* publication.

It has served to support the most revolting and despicable purposes. It has been the apologist of the tyrant in his oppressions—the conqueror in his butcheries—the inquisitor in his tortures—the slaveholder in his cruelties—the debauchee in his revelries—and the priest in his impostures !

Were it possible, by some magic power, to bury in oblivion that ponderous volume, and blot out from the memory of man the dark and cruel scenes which it depicts, more would be accomplished for the immediate enlightenment and morality of mankind, than has been done by the efforts of the boldest and mightiest reformers.

But I forbear proceeding with this portion of the subject, and shall, therefore, commence at once with the Influence of the Bible during the Christian era. This will refer, more particularly, to the New Testament.

Solemnly and distinctly, then, do I aver, that that influence has been most *pernicious*. It has occasioned more division, strife, and sectarianism among men, and, as a consequence, more enmity, intolerance, and bloodshed, than any other single cause during the same period. This is a bold and unqualified assertion, and requires strong and distinct evidence in its confirmation. This I shall render, by taking a review of the progress of Christianity from the time of Christ to the present age.

We find in the New Testament itself, that so early as during the lifetime of Christ, “envyings and jealousies” were growing up amongst his disciples; nay, even amongst the apostles. In Mark, c. ix., and Luke, c. xxii., we are told that they “disputed among themselves who should be the greatest;” and in Matt., c. xx., that they were ambitious, and

expressed their resentment against each other. In Mark, c. x., we read that James and John were anxious of being distinguished, by having the privilege to sit on the right and left hand of Christ in his glory; and that the remaining ten, when they heard it, "began to be much displeased with James and John."

Soon after the death of Jesus, we are informed by Paul, in 1 Cor., c. i., v. 11, 12, that *bitter* contentions had sprung up among the Christians. He says, "For it hath been declared to me, my brethren, by them who are in the house of Chloe, that there are *contentions* amongst you. Now, this I say, that every one of you saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ;" and in c. iii., v. 3, he remarks, "For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you *envying* and *strife*, and *divisions*; are ye not carnal and walk as men?" In c. vi., v. 6, 8, he again observes, "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers;" "nay, you do *wrong*, and *defraud*, that your brethren." But Paul entirely forgot to tell them of his own squabbles. He could preach charity and forbearance pretty eloquently, but like many other Christians, forgot to practice it. In Acts, c. xv., v. 36-40, a very edifying quarrel is reported between him and his brother apostle, Barnabas. "The contention between them," says the story, "was so *sharp*, that they departed asunder one from the other." It is supposed that the real cause of this memorable rupture was a difference of opinion between Paul and Barnabas, as to the crucifixion of Christ. Paul maintained that Christ was crucified, and Barnabas that it was Judas, and not Christ.

Those acquainted with ecclesiastical history will be aware that so early as during the first century, the Christians were split up into many petty sects, all of which spit eternal damnation at each other with the most Christian malignity. One party as-

serted that Christ was a mere man, another that he was a divine character; some admitting his resurrection, others denying it; some supporting the story of the "miraculous conception," and others repudiating it. Paul, the champion of the divinity of Christ, was regarded as an impostor by the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, and his Epistles were esteemed as "idle tales and uninspired reveries." "The Corinthians," also says Epiphanius, "had the Acts of the Apostles with various additions, in which Paul is accused of the artifices of a *false* prophet." Bishop Marsh, in his famous Lectures, alluding to the division amongst the early disciples, says, "So numerous were *heretics* (meaning Christians of different opinions,) in the first and second ages, that *all* the primitive Christians seem to have been included under one, or other denomination of heresy," showing that at that primitive period, division, sectarianism, and intolerance, had followed from the dissemination of the dark, incongruous dogmas of the Christian Scriptures.

In the second century, a violent dispute arose among the Christian churches, as to the time when Easter was to be observed. One division of the church—the eastern—alleged that it should be held on one day; the other—the western—on another day; the former quoting their authority John and Philip, the latter Peter and Paul. This celebrated dispute occasioned much cruel persecution. Victor, the Roman prelate, excommunicated all the eastern churches—cursed them as heretics, and denounced all intercourse with them. Thus, by the anathema of this "man of God," were the people of the eastern entirely dis severed from those of the western world, each party looking upon the other as enemies, and fostering the most implacable animosity—and all through a silly story recorded in the New Testament!

Early in the third century, a most puerile, though inveterate controversy, was started among Christians as to the nature of Christ. This controversy, which

lasted for several centuries, raged occasionally with the most bitter, and brutal animosity, and did not terminate until the lives of, at least, 300,000 human beings had been sacrificed in the contention. Eusebius informs us that Theodorit, Sabellius, Paulus, Samasatemus, Bishop of Antioch, and other eminent "Christians," were excommunicated by the dominant faction for their heterodox notions upon this subject. Well might the Rev. Mr. Brown, in his *Defence of Revelation*, declare, that "To hereticate, schismaticate and damn one another, it must be owned, is in a manner, peculiar to Christians. Heathens had too imperfect and uncertain notions of a future state, to show, in this manner, mutual hatred."

It was, not, however, till the fourth century, when Christians had acquired political power, that the *animus* of this religious scheme was manifested in its genuine purity. No sooner was Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, converted to Christianity, and fairly imbued with the *Christian* spirit, than he was prevailed upon by the Christian hierarchy, to institute the most shameful and inhuman persecutions, not only against the heathens, but the heterodox of their own religion. Milner, the pious author of the "Church History," cannot but admit, that "the Christian world was *now* the scene of animosity and contention."

"At the time of Constantine's ascension to the throne of Rome, there was a violent contention among the Christians upon the subject of the Godhead. The substance of this famous controversy, out of which sprang the doctrine of the Trinity, was briefly this.—One party, headed by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, maintained that "*God* is always, and the *Son* always, the same time the *Father*, the same time the *Son*. The *Son* co-exists with *God*, *unbegottenly*, being ever begotten, being *unbegottenly begotten*!" The other party, headed by Arian, the presbyter of Alexander, asserted, that "there was a time when there *was no Son of God*, and that he, who before was not,

afterwards existed, being made, whenever he was made, *just as any man whatever.*"

This silly dispute gave rise to the most unseemly squabbles in the church. Dr. Chandler, in his *History of Persecution*, edited by Atmore, states that "the bishops of each side had already interested the people in their quarrel, and heated them into such a rage, they attacked and fought with, wounded and destroyed each other, and acted with such madness as to commit the greatest impieties for the sake of orthodoxy, and arrived at that pitch of insolence, as to offer great indignities to the imperial images." He concludes, by remarking, that their "animosities were too furious to be appeased." The learned Dr. Mosheim himself admits that "it would be difficult to determine which of the two exceeded most the bounds of probity, charity, and moderation." At last, in the year 325, Constantine convened a council of the Christian functionaries, distinguished in ecclesiastical history, as the Council of Nice, for the purpose of settling this disgraceful schism. Such was the *humility and forbearance* displayed by these "Christians" on this memorable occasion, that the riot and uproar which existed during the whole of their sittings, would have disgraced a *pot-house*. Theodorit says, "Those of the Arian party were subtle and crafty, and, like shelves under water, concealed their wickedness.— Amongst the orthodox party, some were of a *quarrelling, malicious temper*, and accused several of the bishops, and then presented their accusatory libels to the emperor." Tindal states, in his "Rights of the Church," p. 195, "that if those accusations and libels which the bishops, at the council of Nice, gave in of one another to the Emperor, were now extant, in all probability we should have rolls of scandal, that few would have much reason to boast of the first Œcumenical council, where with such heat, passion, and fury, the bishops fell foul of one another." A rich scene for bishops! How characteristic of the system!

The issue of this disorderly assembly was, that the Arians were defeated. The Emperor, in order to establish the doctrine of the opposite party, issued an edict against the Arians, as well as heretics and infidels of all kinds. The edict declares, as given in Socrates's Ecclesiastical History, Book 1, c. vii., "Moreover, we thought good, that if there can be found, extant, any work or book compiled by Arius, the same should be burnt to ashes, so that not only his damnable doctrines may thereby be rooted out, but, also, that no relique thereof may remain unto posterity.— This, also, we straightly command and charge, that if any man be found to hide or conceal any book made by Arius, and not immediately bring forth the same book, and deliver it up to be burned, that the said offender, for so doing, shall die the death. For as soon as he is taken, our pleasure is, that his head be stricken off from his shoulders. God keep you in his tuition!" Indeed, I think so. What a sample of Christian charity! How honorable to Constantine, and his priestly advisers!

O! what good man does not tremble with horror at such monstrous intolerance, and regret the day that a book should have come into existence, about the dogmas of which, such atrocities have been perpetrated? Well might the Emperor Julian declare, (who was at one time a Christian, though he subsequently became a Pagan, and one of the best Emperors that ever reigned in Rome,) that "he found by experience, that even beasts were not so cruel to men, as the generality of Christians were to one another." The Rev. Dr. Chandler, in his History, exclaims, "What confusions and calamities—what ruins and desolations—what rapines and murders—have been introduced into the world, under the pretended authority of Christ, and of supporting and propagating Christianity!"

Following this religion through succeeding periods, scenes of intolerance, violence, and cruelty, present themselves to our view, so unspeakably horrible, that

it sickens me to record them. In the fifth century, the church was distracted by a schism occasioned by the heresy of Nestorius. It consisted in his declaring that the Virgin Mary was not the mother of God; that she was "only a woman, and, therefore, God could not be born of her." "I cannot," says he, "call him God, who once was not above two or three months old." He, therefore, would only consent to call her the "mother of Christ." This doctrine was considered so frightfully heretical, that a council was called at Ephesus, in Greece, to suppress it. This meeting proved such a boisterous one, that Mr. Tindal informs us, in his work before quoted, that "Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexander, cuffed and kicked Flavius, Patriarch of Constantinople, with that fury, that three days after he died." Mild bishops, truly!

The decision of this Synod was against Nestorius, which was "the occasion of irreconcilable hatreds amongst the bishops and people, who were so enraged against each other, that there was no passing, with any safety, from one province or city to another, because every one pursued his neighbor as his enemy, and revenged themselves upon one another, under a pretence of ecclesiastical zeal!" Mosheim tells us that "the Greeks called this council 'a band or assembly of robbers,' to signify that everything was carried in it by fraud or violence; and many councils, indeed, both in this and the following ages, are equally entitled to the same dishonorable appellation."

Towards the close of this century, another Synod was called at Chalcedon, to consider the heresy of Dioscorus, who had asserted that "Jesus Christ consisted of two natures, before his union or incarnation, but that after this he had one nature only." The discussion of this truly momentous question was so violent and obstreperous, that the holy fathers could no longer contain themselves, and cried out in fury, "*Damn* Dioscorus — banish Dioscorus — Christ hath deposed Dioscorus!" Choice language for a *pious*

assembly, an assembly called together to decide upon "heavenly truths!" John, in the Rev., c. vii., tells us that there was *silence* in heaven just for the space of half an hour, but had there been quietness in these noisy conventions for only five minutes, I apprehend, it would have been a phenomenon.

Continuing our history, we learn from Mosheim, Du Pin, Tindal, and other Christian writers, that during the sixth, seventh, and eighth century, more councils were called to discuss various scriptural topics, all of which were of the same tumultuous character, and terminated in the bitter persecution of the discomfitted faction. At the first council, held at Constantinople, to decide upon the heresies of Origen, the first point discussed was, "Whether those who were dead, (meaning the heretics,) were to be anathematised or accursed?" And, such was the religious hatred to all heretics, that they not only excommunicated and cursed all the living, but they actually wanted to dig into the very graves of the dead, and curse the bones that were rotting in them! One of the priests, named Eutychius, "looked with contempt on the fathers for their hesitation in so plain a matter, and told them that there needed no deliberation on the subject, for that King Josias, formerly did not only destroy the idolatrous priests who were living, but dug also those who had been dead long before, out of their graves." This settled the dispute at once, and Eutychius was made a bishop for this, his skill in Scripture and casuistry.

Towards the end of the eighth century, (the year 787,) a council was convened to decide, whether images should be set up in churches; and, after it was *decided* in the affirmative, they added, as was their usual custom, "*damnation* to all heretics—damnation on the council that warred against venerable images—the Holy Trinity hath deposed them."

The disputes, among Christians, upon this contemptible question, was the cause of a civil war in

the islands of the Archipelago, under Leo IV., and occasioned throughout Christendom, before its termination, the death of at least 50,000 human beings.

We have now arrived at the tenth century. We shall hastily pass from this period to the sixteenth, in order that we may show, that after the Reformation, under the Reformed church, among Protestants as well as Catholics, the Bible was the cause of the same dreadful evils, as characterized the dark ages. I may remark, that from the tenth to the sixteenth century, the Christian world was one frightful scene of intolerance and blood. Europe was a moral wilderness, resounding with the savage howlings of the bigot and persecutor. Yes,—

“Earth groaned beneath religion’s iron age,
And priests dared babble of a God of peace,
E’en while their hands were red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house.”

During this interval were enacted the bloody tragedies of the Crusades, the Inquisitions, the massacre of the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and other butcheries, too horrible to enumerate; and all for the “glory of God,” and the vindication of his blessed Word!” We now approach the glorious Reformation. Calvin, one of the principal actors upon the Christian stage at this period, no sooner obtained power and influence, than he began, like the Catholics, to persecute those whom he deemed heretical. He caused Michael Servetus to be burned in Geneva. He wrote a Declaration to maintain the “true faith,” in which he states, “it was *lawful* to punish heretics, and that this *wretch*, (meaning Servetus,) was *justly* executed.” He also persecuted Castello, in a manner so rude and brutal, that he calls him “a blasphemer, reviler, malicious, *barking* dog, full of ignorance, beastiality, and impudence, an impostor, a base corrupter of the sacred writings, a mocker of God, a contemner of all religion, an im-

puident fellow, a filthy dog, a knave, an impious, lewd, crooked-minded, vagabond, beggarly rogue." Charitable John Calvin! Glorious *Reformer*, indeed! But, listen to the furious rage and vindictive intolerance of the worthy follower and coadjutor of Calvin, John Knox, the Reformer of Scotland. I take the following from the "Edinburgh Magazine and Review," for July, 1771. It is an extract from one of John's prayers against the Catholics. Addressing himself to God against his enemies, he charitably exclaims, "Repress the pride of these blood-thirsty tyrants, *consume them* in thine anger, according to the reproach which they have laid against thy holy name; pour forth thy vengeance upon them, and let our eyes behold the blood of the saints required at their hands.—Delay not thy vengeance, O Lord, but let death devour them in haste. Let the earth swallow them up, and let them go down quick to *hell*, for there is no hope of their amendment. The fear and reverence of thy holy name is quite banished from their hearts; and, therefore, yet, again, O Lord, *consume them—consume them* in thine anger!" O! what a Christian!—what a "Reformer!" What is the language of *Luther*, the great father of the "Glorious Reformation," when speaking of the Catholics? Listen—"The Papists are all asses, put them in whatever form you please, boiled, roasted, baked, fried, skinned, beat, hashed, they are always the same—*asses*. The Pope was born out of the devil's posteriors, full of devils, lies, blasphemies, and idolatries; he is Anti-Christ, the robber of churches, the ravisher of virgins, the greatest of pimps, the governor of Sodom."

What blackguardism for a Christian, and a "*Reformer!*" When the Protestant priesthood had emancipated themselves from the iron yoke of Popery, it was not long ere they established a despotism equally brutal and iniquitous. All Dissenters were persecuted with as much inveteracy, as under the Catholic hierarchy. During the bloody reign of Henry VIII., an act was passed, "abolishing diversity

of opinion in certain articles concerning the Christian religion." By this enactment, it was enforced that all Dissenters, for the first offence, were to be imprisoned during the king's pleasure; and, for the second, to suffer death, (Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 2.) Under this law, many dissenting sects were persecuted in the most inhuman manner—the Anabaptists, the Brownists, the Puritans, the Quakers, and other sectaries experienced the displeasure of the Orthodox, and, of course, were subjected to all kinds of pains and penalties.

The following was the form of abjuration put to the Anabaptists, which they were obliged to make, or be burnt:—"Whereas we, being seduced by the devil, the spirit of error, and false teacher, have fallen into these most *damnable* and detestable heresies, that Christ took not flesh of the Virgin Mary, that the infants of the faithful should not be baptized; and that a Christian man may not be a magistrate, or bear the sword and office of authority; and that it is not lawful for a Christian man to take an oath; now, by the grace of God, and by the assistance of good and learned ministers of Christ's Church, I understand the same to be most damnable and detestable heresies, and do ask God, before his church, mercy for my said former errors, and do forsake, recant, and renounce them; and I abjure them from the bottom of my heart, protesting I certainly believe the contrary. And, further, I confess the *whole doctrine* established and published in the Church of England, and also that which is received in the Dutch Church, in London, is found true, and according to God's Word, whereunto in all things I submit myself, and will be most gladly a member of the Dutch Church, and henceforth utterly abominating and forsaking all and every Anabaptiscal errors."—Crosby, vol. i. p. 68.

Neal states (vol. i. p. 540,) that one Leighton, for writing a book, in which prelacy was denounced as "Anti-Scriptural," was condemned by the High

Commissioner to pay a heavy fine, and then to be set upon the pillory a convenient time, and have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose slit, and be branded in the face with a double S, and then to be carried back to prison; and, after a few days, be pilloried again in Cheapside, and be then likewise whipped, and the other side of his nose slit, and be then shut up in close confinement for the remainder of his life!" Bishop Laud, on hearing this decision, pulled off his cap, and returned God thanks.

The celebrated Richard Baxter was treated in the most infamous manner so lately as James II. At his trial, Judge Jeffries addressed him as follows:—"Richard! Richard! dost thou think we will hear thee poison the Court? Richard, thou art an old fellow, and an old knave—thou hast written books enow to load a cart, every one as full of sedition, I might say, of *treason*, as an egg is full of meat; hadst thou been *whipt* out of thy writing-trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou pretendest to be a preacher of the gospel of peace; as thou hast one foot in the grave, it is time for thee to begin to think what account thou intendest to give, but, leave thee to thyself, and I see thou wilt go on as thou hast begun; but, by the grace of God, I will look after thee. I know thou hast a mighty party, and I see a great many of the brotherhood in corners, awaiting to see what will become of their *mighty don*, and a doctor of the party at thy elbow; but, by the grace of Almighty God, I will crush you all."

The Rev. Mr. Robinson, in his lectures on Nonconformity, calculates that "Clarendon, and the bishops in the reign of Charles II. alone, imprisoned and murdered 8000 Dissenters, ruined thousands of families, drove multitudes abroad, and robbed them of from twelve to fourteen millions of property."

But the Dissenters themselves were persecutors when they acquired power.

The Puritans, during the Commonwealth, having

obtained predominance, expelled from their livings no less than 10,000 Church of England clergymen, and treated many most barbarously. Their holy spleen extended to all sects who did not believe as they believed. Crosby informs us, (vol. i. p. 184-190,) that on the 26th of May, 1645, the Lord Mayor, Court of Aldermen, and Common Council of London, presented a petition to Parliament, commonly called the "City Remonstrance," in which they desired, "that some strict and speedy cause might be taken for the suppressing all private and separate congregations; that all Anabaptists, Brownists, heretics, schismatics, blasphemers, and all other sectaries, who conformed not to the public discipline, established, or to be established by Parliament, might be fully declared against, and some effectual course settled for proceeding against such persons, and that no person disaffected to Presbyterian government might be employed in any place of trust." This "remonstrance" was supported by the whole Scottish nation, who beseeched the English Puritans to proceed boldly, and cease not their "labor of love," till the three kingdoms should be united in one faith and worship. The General Assembly of "divines" at Westminster, forgetting how they had formerly smarted under the lash of persecution, declared, that "granting *toleration* would be opening a gap to all sects, and make a perpetual division in the church." In a work, published by this "Assembly," we find the following choice morsel of priestly liberality, "Whatsoever doctrine is contrary to godliness, and opens a door to liberalism and profaneness, you must reject as a soul poison, such is the doctrine of an universal toleration in religion." These enlightened sentiments were reciprocated in a publication issued in Lancashire, about the same period, called the "Harmonious Assent of the Lancashire ministers with their brethren in London." The authors of this precious work affirm, unblushingly, that "A toleration would be

putting a sword in a madman's hand; a cup of poison into the hand of a child; a letting loose of madmen with firebrands in their hands, and appointing a city of refuge in men's souls for the Devil to fly to; a laying a stumbling block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christ's fold to prey upon the lambs; neither would it be to provide for tender conscience, but take all conscience." Such were the sentiments of Dissenters, when in *power*. How characteristic of Presbyterian consistency! Liberty of conscience, when they could not enjoy it, was a glorious thing; but when they had obtained that liberty, and *others* wished to enjoy it, "a toleration would be putting a sword in a madman's hand," "appointing a city of refuge in men's souls *for the Devil to fly to.*" It was in America, however, that the Puritans exhibited their purity to the greatest advantage. Robinson, Howitt, and other historians inform us, that they instituted the most brutal enactments, against the Quakers in particular. The colonies of Massachusetts passed a law, prohibiting Quakers coming into the colony, imposing the penalty of *banishment* for the first offence, and of *death* upon such as should return after banishment. A succession of most sanguinary laws were enacted against them, such as *imprisonment, cutting off the ears, boring the tongue with red-hot irons, &c.* Four Quakers were actually executed for returning after banishment. If we consider the effects resulting from the introduction of our Bible religion into our colonies generally, we shall find it has produced the same strife, sectarianism, and bloodshed as at home. Did time permit, I could refer you to many most horrible and revolting facts. I must content myself with only one or two examples. Mr. Garrison, the distinguished abolitionist, in a speech delivered at the Anti-Slavery Convention, held in London some time ago, mentions the following horrible specimen of "Christian civilization." He gives an extract from a letter,

written by Mr. J. Brown, a missionary at Liberia, giving an account of a recent attack of 300 natives upon the Methodist Missionary Station at Huddington. The natives had been exasperated at the dogmatism of the Christian priests. The letter states, "After an hour's fighting, the assailants were repulsed, with the loss of their leader and thirty or forty men, which achievement *was effected chiefly by two Methodist missionaries, and two native converts.* We were awakened in our town by the firing of a gun about two miles from us; and, while we were musing on what it could mean, we were again alarmed by the voices of several of our people exclaiming, 'War is come! war is come!' Brother Simon Harris got out of bed immediately, and went out in town. But he returned in one minute, and told me to be out of bed and load the guns for war was at hand. I immediately arose, slipped on my clothes, and was on my knees to ask God to help us. By that time the enemy was within musket-shot of the mission-house. Brother Harris went down and gave them the first shot, and was answered by ten or twelve muskets from the enemy, while I was loading muskets in the chamber. In less than one minute they were running up and down the picket fence about three rods from the house, as thick as bees around a hive. Bro. Bennett Dormory and Brother Harris were the only two who stood in front, between the enemy and the house. They both stood their ground, and cut them down like mowers cutting grass. Meanwhile, Bro. Jarvis Z. Nichols came into the chamber where I was loading muskets (for we had eighteen muskets in the chamber, which we knew would go at every snap, and one hundred ready made cartridges, and a keg of powder,) and poured a stream of lead down upon them from the windows, as fast as two boys could hand him loaded muskets. In the midst of all this, the enemy broke through the fence, and poured into the yard like bees. Brothers Harris and Dormo-

ry now retreated to the door, in which both stood side by side, about two rods from them, with two muskets apiece, throwing buckshot into their bowels, hearts, and brains, like a tornado. While they were gathering up their dead to take off, I had the best chance of any to fire into the groups. But they soon slung their shattered bodies, and went off as if the wicked one was after them. The engagement continued one hour and twenty-two minutes. After they were gone, we went out on the battle ground; and, although they had carried off all their dead except three big slabsided fellows, yet I never saw such a scene before. There was blood and brains in every direction. The path on which they went was one complete gore on both sides; yea, it stood in puddles. We picked up their fingers by the way-side."

O! and this is *promulgating the "gospel!"*—disseminating the "True Word!"—"enlightening the heathen!" Bah!

One more specimen, and I have done. Sir Edward Belcher, in a recent work, "Voyages Round the World," 1836—42, speaking of the condition of the natives of the Sandwich Islands, says, "Their labor is demanded for the church, the missionaries having obtained the necessary edict, which *compels* the natives to labor on the roofs, to procure blocks of stone for the purpose of *building a new church*. The first duty of obtaining subsistence for their families was deemed but a *secondary* consideration. If they should presume to do so on Sunday, their *punishment* was *double* labor the ensuing week." "At Tahiti," says Sir Edward, "the natives are *compelled* to frequent the church." Oh, yes! "*compel* them to come in."—That is *eminently Christian*, and this is "spreading the *gospel* in foreign parts," *forcing* natives to support Christianity.

It may be alleged, however, that the Bible does not sanction such persecution.

What! when we are told in Galatians, c. i., v. 8, that "though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached to you, *let him be accursed*," are we not to say that it sanctions persecution? When we are told, in c. v., v. 12, "I would they were even *cut off* which trouble you," are we not to affirm that it sanctions persecution? When we are told in Matthew, c. x., v. 15, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city," are we not to insist that it sanctions persecution?

But Christians themselves have admitted that it sanctions persecution. Beza, a distinguished Christian author of the fourth century, wrote a book in defence of persecution, and quotes some of the very passages I have just read to you, and others mentioned in my Tenth Lecture.

Bogarman, the President of the Synod of Dart, held in the eleventh century, translated Beza's book, and recommended it to the magistrates, which recommendation was adopted.

But I may be told that Beza was a Catholic.—Then listen to the opinion of the Rev. W. Fulke, a distinguished English Protestant clergyman of the seventeenth century. In his work against the Papists, he says, "for the division of parishes, excommunications, suspensions, solemnizing of marriages with the laws thereof, and the punishing of heretics by death, they are all manifestly proved out of Scripture!!!"

Let me now come nearer home.

What are the effects produced by the dissemination of this book in our own age? Has it tended to unite mankind? Has it bound them together by sweet ties of love and fraternity? Has it made men brothers? Ah, no! It has split them up into an endless number of petty sectaries, and sown, in plentiful profusion,

the bitter seeds of discord and hatred. This I will prove by showing the opinion which the various Christian sects entertain of each other. "Calvinism, say the Unitarians, "is a tremendous doctrine, which had it really been taught by Jesus and his apostles, their gospel might truly have been denounced, not as the doctrine of peace and good will, but a message of wrath and injustice, of terror and despair." It was viewed by Dr. Priestly, not only "as the extravagance of error, but as a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry."—(Rev. J. Belsham's discourse on Dr. Priestly.) By the Arminian Christians, Calvinism is represented as a system, which, says Dr. Jortin, consists "of human creatures without liberty, doctrine without sense, faith without reason, and a God without mercy." Mr. Warren declares that "its frightful demoralizing errors are spreading themselves like a black mist through the land, blasting every spiritual joy, withering every amiable feeling, and poisoning every social and domestic charity." By the Calvinist Christians, on the other hand, Arminianism is denounced "as delusive, dangerous, and ruinous to immortal souls."—(Close's Sermons, 1834.) Toplady affirms that, "a particle of it never attended a saint to heaven." "Socinians," says the Rev. Mr. Cunningham, in his *Apostacy of the Church of Rome*, p. 168, "are even farther removed than the Church of Rome." The Rev. Mr. Norris, as quoted in Aspland's plea, denounces their doctrines as "envenomed blasphemies." Arch. Magee says, in his *Discourse on Atonement*, 1809, their system "embraces the most daring impieties that ever disgraced the name of Christianity." "I would rather," says the Rev. Mr. Carson, "be the veriest prostitute, the disgraced and infected inhabitant of the lowest brothel, than be Dr. Drummond, (the Arian.) I would rather be a Thurtel, the sanguinary and premeditated murderer, than be Dr. Priestly, the Unitarian." See *Bib. Christians*, Nov. 1830, p. 449. Methodism; according to the Or-

thodox Church Magazine, for 1802, p. 326, derived both its origin and its name from the Methodism of the Devil. "The Methodists," says the Rev. Calvinist Mulock, in his Divine Truth, p. 129, 1821, "and other miserably-misled fanatics, are awfully alienated from all knowledge of the true God. Their *experiences*, when tried by Scripture, are found to be details of the polluted workings of the imagination in minds stimulated by the ravings of the hot-brained enthusiasts. They have contrived what may be termed *convulsive* Christianity, a system of sighs, groans, and sensual impulses, to supersede that glorious faith.—Looking through the annals of Methodism, the Christian cannot fail to notice the *subtlety of Satan*, in thus seasonably providing a substitute for Popery in the hour of its decline. It retains everything of Popery, but its gorgeousness and ritual observances. The same depraved deference to human nature, stamps it as the religion of *corrupt human nature*." The whole body of Protestant Dissenters, in Godolphin's Report, p. 625, are denounced "as accursed, devoted to the Devil, and separated from Christ." The Rev. Mr. Gathercole, in a letter to a dissenting minister, published in 1834, actually declares that, "dissent is worse than *drunkenness*, and its followers are actuated by the *Devil*, and the *curse* of God rests heavily on them all!" The Church of England, in return, is denounced by the Unitarians through Dr. Priestly, in his Remarks on Blackstone, p. 171, "as idolatrous, and consequently a deviation from the gospel of the most *criminal* kind," and by the *Calvinists*, through the Rev. Mr. Binney, as quoted in the Christian Observer, 1834, "as an obstacle to the progress of truth and holiness in the land, and *that it destroys more souls than it saves*." The Papal religion again is repudiated by Bishop Warburton, in his Principle of Religion, as an "impious farce;" and by the Rev. Mr. Cecil, as quoted in Cunningham's Apostacy, p. 140, as "the masterpiece of Satan—a complicated

and almost incredible system of idolatry, blasphemy, and may I not add, *devilism*?" But the whole of the foregoing are denounced by their venerable mother, the Roman Catholic Church, "as heretics and schismatics," and their clergy damned "as thieves and ministers of the Devil."—Romish Testament on John ix., and Heb. v. i.

Such, then, is Bibleism, *as it is*. Such the dissensions and animosities which it has engendered among mankind. Dr. Scott very justly says, in his *Christian Life*, "the professors of religion are crumbled into many sects and parties, each spitting fire and damnation at its adversary, so that if all say true, or, indeed, any two of them, in 500 sects, which there are, (and for ought I know, there may be 5000,) it is 500 to one but that every one is damned, because every one damns all but itself, and is itself damned by 499."—Glorious prospects these for the *believers*! How I pity them! What a stupid lottery!

My friends, we have thus given a hasty sketch of the Influence of the Bible during the Christian era.—I ask, has not that influence been *pernicious*? Do not truth and humanity alike demand that it should be repudiated? O! must it still continue to spread mental desolation among men? Must it still be allowed to make that fair field dark, dreary, barren, and cold, which might otherwise be strewn with the bright flowers of freedom, knowledge, and truth? No! the spirit of the age forbids it! Man is now releasing himself from the iron grasp of priestcraft. He has heard in the distance, the song of Free Inquiry, and never will he rest till he has joined in its glorious chorus. Let not the religious despots of the age imagine that they will suppress this spirit. Let them not imagine that they will confine its lofty soul within the bars of a prison-house. Let them not conceive that their denunciations and anathemas will deprive it of its vitality. Vain and presumptuous mortals!—Victims of a system of falsehood and imposture! No!

let them bid the whirlwind be calm, the earthquake be still, the thunderbolt be powerless, the ocean be stagnant, but bid not the human mind remain quiescent in their unholy grasp. No !

“ Fear not that the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith ;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death :
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.”

LECTURE THIRTEENTH.

MORALITY WITHOUT THE BIBLE.

FRIENDS—

IN the address I recently delivered on the Morality of the Bible, I observed, that amongst the mass of obscenity and immorality which characterized that production, there might probably be found a few unexceptionable passages, but these were by no means original or transcendental. Passages as good, and in many instances, much better, could be quoted from the writings of men who knew nothing of the "Word of God," who lived centuries before the Christian era, and whose reputation was not like the alleged authors of the Bible, tainted with crimes and vices, the very mention of which was pollution. I gave a few instances in point, promising that on a future occasion I would enter fully into the subject. I now appear to redeem that promise.

There is a vulgar notion amongst Christians that there never were any views of morality before the Bible was composed, and that *without* the Bible we should have no idea of right and wrong. We should be left without a moral rudder or compass to steer us through the ocean of life.

This notion I hold to be as absurd, as it is gratuitous and presumptuous. Morality existed before the Bible existed, and morality will exist when the Bible is obsolete. We can find morality, and that of the

highest and purest character—morality utterly unmixed and uncorrupted with the obscenities, barbarities, mysteries, and incongruities which crowd the pages of the “Holy Scriptures,” in the writings of men who could never have known of those precious lucubrations.

Morality, therefore, is perfectly independent of the Jewish and Christian text book.

We shall first remark upon a few of the authors of ancient Greece, commencing with Thales. I may state that the authorities I have consulted are highly respectable.—Dr. Enfield’s “History of Philosophy,” and “The Student; or, the Biography of Grecian Philosophers.”

Thales was born B. C. 643, and died B. C. 548. He was one of the founders of the Grecian schools of philosophy, and so ardent was his thirst for knowledge, that he gave up the care of his estate to his nephew. Science owes much to Thales, which cannot be said of any of the Bible writers. Though living at so remote a period, he was so far acquainted with astronomy and mathematics, as to be able to predict an eclipse, and to determine the solar revolution with such accuracy, that he corrected the Grecian calendar, and made their year contain 365 days. His *moral* doctrines, with which we have more particularly to do, on this occasion, were singularly excellent. I mentioned in my address on the morality of the Bible, that he taught the *very doctrine* Christians say comprises all morality, “Do unto others as you would wish others to do unto you.” This, we are told, is the “golden rule,” and the law by which the moral world should alone be governed. Now this law, the *basis* of all morality, was propounded by a philosopher, who was ignorant of the Scriptures, who wrote 600 years before Christ was born, 300 years before the Old Testament was translated into Greek, and 200 before even the Old Testament was compiled. I hold, then, that this, the

fundamental principle of morality, is altogether independent of the Bible, and were that book forgotten to-morrow, the acknowledged standard of morals would still be left to regulate the actions of mankind. The words of Thales are, "Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing." He also taught that noble aphorism, "Know thyself." How soon would vice and disease be unknown if this injunction was universally followed! He likewise says, "Let your study be to correct the blemishes of the mind, rather than those of the face." Were this the practice of the world at the present moment, we should see society adorned with wise and good men, instead of being, as it is, overrun with dandies and coquettes. "Stop the mouth of slander," says he, "by prudence." "Enrich not thyself by unjust means." "Be not idle, though rich." "Learn, and teach better things." "Let not any words fall from thee which may accuse thee to him who hath committed anything in trust to thee." "Entertain not evil." "Idleness is troublesome." "Intemperance hurtful." "Ignorance intolerable." "Use moderation." "Believe not all." "If a governor, rule thyself." "Be equally mindful of friends, present and absent." "Cherish thy parents," which is a beautiful contrast to Christ's doctrine of "He who hates not his father and his mother," &c. "What thou bestowest on thy parents, thou shalt receive from thy children in thine old age." A beautiful exhortation to filial duty and affection. He gives the following rational definition of human happiness:—"Sound health, moderate fortune, and a mind well stored with knowledge; these are the grand ingredients of happiness."

Find me morality better than this in the Bible. Give me any name from the Scriptures that can be compared to this Grecian sage. I defy you.

We will now speak of Solon, the immortal law-giver of Athens, a different character, I assure you, to the Biblical sage, Solomon. He lived from 638 to

558 B. C. He observed, "Make reason thy guide"—not blind faith as inculcated by Paul and Peter. Also says he, "Study excellence, and aim at acquiring it." "In everything you do, learn to consider the end." "Laws are like cobwebs which entangle the lesser sort, the greater break through." "Cherish thy friend." "Reverence thy parents." "Those are happy," he remarks, "who are competently furnished with outward things, act honestly, and live temperately." This great patriot died with the conviction, that "he had left the world better for having lived in it," not as Solomon, exclaiming, "all is vanity."

Pittacus, the next distinguished author of antiquity from whom I shall quote, was one of the seven wise men of Greece. He flourished about 570 B. C. He also, with Thales, as mentioned on a former occasion, taught identically the same doctrine, as that which is said to be the corner-stone of all morality, and which Christians pretend is so peculiar to their own system. He says, "Avoid doing that to your neighbor, which you would take amiss if he was to do it to you." He also taught, "Whatever you do, do it well." "Never boast of your plans before they are executed, for fear of the ridicule and disappointment to which you will be exposed if you do not accomplish them." Pittacus felt a supreme contempt and disgust at that beastly habit, I was going to say, crime, drunkenness. He proposed from the public forum of Athens, that every fault committed while the person was in a state of intoxication, instead of being excused, should receive double punishment.

I wonder what Pittacus would have thought if he had heard of the freaks of that Bible moralist, Noah! What a contrast between these heathen philosophers and those Scriptural heroes!

Bias, another of the seven wise men of Greece, who flourished about 556 B. C., taught that the value of knowledge was above all price. During an invasion of his country, one of his friends observed

with surprise that he took no means of preserving anything, Bias replied, alluding to the knowledge he had acquired, "I carry all my treasures with me."

Chilo, another of the wise men, was a Spartan, and a man of the most rigid integrity. He was made one of the Spartan Ephori. He lived 542 years B. C. The following are a few of the moral precepts inculcated by that model of virtue. "Honest loss is preferable to shameful gain"—a hint which might be useful to many trading Christians of the present day. "If you are great, be condescending, for it is better to be loved than to be hated"—a hint which might also be of service to many Christian despots, in this Christian age. "Think before you speak." "Gold is tried by the touchstone, and men are tried by gold." "Do not desire impossibilities." "Never ridicule the unfortunate."

Cleobulus, another of the seven, taught a doctrine much similar in spirit, though less paradoxical in language, to that boasted doctrine of Christ's, which is said by Christians to be so pre-eminently charitable and moral, viz., "Love your enemies." Cleobulus says, "Be kind to your friends that they may continue such; and to your enemies that they may become your friends." Cleobulus lived 571 years B. C. If, therefore, there be any merit in that dogma, it is due to the former. The following were also his maxims:—"Avoid excess;" "Be more desirous to hear than to speak;" "Before you go home, think what you have to do—when you come home, examine yourself and consider whether you have done all well."

I shall now speak of that illustrious moral teacher, Socrates, the Robert Owen of Athens. No character in the Bible can be compared to that virtuous sage. His life was one of exalted goodness and utility. No one can contemplate his actions and his teachings without feeling a better man, and few, I think, can read of his cruel death without, as Cicero remarks,

shedding tears. Socrates is a glorious answer to that insufferable piece of cant and assurance—that unless a man is a Christian or a believer in the Bible, he cannot be a good man. The character of Christ himself, considered only in its most favorable features, falls quite into the shade, when placed in juxtaposition with that of the Athenian moralist. Dr. Enfield, who was a Christian minister and historian of considerable celebrity, admits that Socrates was “a man whose penetrating judgment, exalted virtue, and liberal spirit, united with exemplary integrity and purity of manners, entitled him to the highest distinction among the ancient philosophers.”

Time will only admit of my quoting a few of his maxims. He taught that “True felicity is not to be derived from external possessions, but from wisdom, which consists in the knowledge and practice of virtue; that the cultivation of virtuous manners is necessarily attended with pleasure, as well as profit—that the honest man alone is happy, and that it is absurd to separate things which in nature are so closely united as virtue and interest.” He held that honors and riches ought to be secondary to the acquisition of sound knowledge. “The wealth of a covetous man,” he beautifully observes, “is like the sun after it is set—it cheers nobody.” “Believe not those who praise all your actions, but those who reprove your faults.”

When solicited by Crito to escape from his cruel imprisonment, he nobly replied, “That no man on any pretence, should return an injury for an injury,” a sentiment worthy of such a philanthropist. Socrates was essentially a practical moralist. Christ, when in his best humors, was but a theorist. Socrates was born 469, and died 400 years B. C.

Aristippus, the founder of the Cyreniac, who flourished about 365 years before the Christian epoch, promulgated some very sound and enlightened views of morality. He was the Bentham of that age. His

opinions are decidedly utilitarian. He held that pleasure was the ultimate object of human pursuit, and that happiness consisted rather in a pleasing agitation of the mind, or active enjoyment, than in indolence or tranquillity. "Prefer labor to idleness," says he, "unless you would prefer rust to brightness."—"The truly learned are not those that read much, but those who read what is useful"—a very judicious observation. "Friendship," he remarks, "is reciprocal benevolence which inclines each individual to be as anxious for another person's welfare as for his own." "It is better to be poor than illiterate, for the poor only want money, the illiterate want the distinguishing characteristics of human nature."

The following is quite equal to the boasted wisdom of Solomon, as given in the passage, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Aristippus remarks, "Young people should be taught those things which will be useful to them when they become men." Contrary to the opinion of that arch-apostle, Paul, Aristippus entertained a high opinion of the utility and advantages of philosophical inquiry. Being asked by a friend, "What is the advantage you receive from philosophy?" he replied, "It enables me to converse freely with all mankind"—a noble, liberal, and enlightened sentiment. As much could not be said for religion; especially the Christian religion. It teaches, through its apostle John, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him God-speed;" nay, says Paul, "let him be accursed;" and Christ himself remarks, with that bitterness so peculiar to him, "when ye depart from his house, shake off the dust of your feet."—O! how nobly does the spirit of the heathen philosopher rise above that of the Christian bigot, morality above religion, philosophy above superstition!

We will now refer to Aristotle, one of the leading philosophers of antiquity, and unquestionably the

most varied and voluminous writer of any age. He was born 384 B. C., and died 322 B. C.

Where will you find a better definition of justice than the following? "Justice is the virtue of treating every one according to his deserts." "Justice includes the observance of the laws for the preservation of society, and the discharge of obligations and debts between equals." He also taught the following excellent maxims: "Learning is the best provision against old age." "Friends, are one soul in two bodies."—"There is just as much difference between the wise and the foolish as there is between the living and the dead." "A virtuous life is itself a source of delight;" a splendid sentiment. Again, "the purest and noblest pleasure is that which a good man derives from virtuous actions." Will you tell me there is no morality in that sentiment? Find me a passage in the whole of the Bible to equal it. "Virtue is either theoretical, or practical; theoretical virtue consists in the due exercise of the understanding—practical, in the pursuit of what is right and good." "Happiness," says he, "consists in a conduct conformable to virtue." These sentiments are worthy of an enlightened and good man, and are infinitely superior to the Bible morality.

Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynic sect, propounded many useful maxims—maxims which ought to make some of our modern Christian moralists blush. He had a great antipathy to war, as being alike cruel and barbarous. He did not exhort his fellow-citizens, in the language of Christ, "If you have no sword, sell your garment and buy one," but as became a man of enlightenment and humanity, he entreated his countrymen to abandon that demoralizing and inhuman practice. "War," said a person to him on one occasion, "carries off many wretched beings;" and this is the cold philosophy of not a few of our modern Christians. "True," said Antisthenes, "but it makes many more than it carries off." Well would it be for civilization, if, instead of having more Chris-

tians, we had a few more Antisthenites. That distinguished man flourished about 390 years before our era.

Pythagoras, who has done more for philosophy than any Christian, taught some admirable maxims. He lived 500 years B. C. "Wisdom and virtue," says he, "are our best defence, every other guard is weak and unstable." What a singular contrast to the doctrine of Paul, "If a man be ignorant—let him be ignorant"—and that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law!" In the estimation of that Bible moralist, good works were as "filthy rags." Pythagoras also enjoined, "Do what you judge to be right, whatever the vulgar may think of you; if you despise their praise, despise also their censure." If Christians were to practice this injunction there would be less hypocrisy, cant, and profession amongst them than at present prevails. Men can never afford to keep a conscience, till they dare to keep one. Pythagoras attached great importance to the education of the rising generation. He remarks, "Much forethought and discretion is necessary in the education of children. The following beautiful advice was given by him to his scholars:—"Let not sleep fall upon thine eyes till thou hast thrice reviewed the transactions of the past day. Where have I turned from rectitude? What have I been doing? What have I left undone which I ought to have done? Begin thus from the first act, and proceed; and in conclusion, at the ill which thou hast done be troubled, and rejoice for the good."

In Democritus we likewise find many worthy sentiments. He was highly distinguished among the great men of Greece and was born 470 years B. C., and died 361. "It is criminal," says he, "not only to do mischief, but to wish it." "He who subdues his passions is more heroic than he who vanquishes an enemy." "Do nothing shameful, though you are alone." "Every country is open to a wise man, for

he is a citizen of the world." The following noble sentiment is found in the writings of this great man, and is in advance even of this age:—"It is the office of prudence, where it is possible, to prevent injuries, but where this cannot be done, a wise regard to our own tranquillity will prevent us from revenging them." "We are often told of that ejaculation of Christ's—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But this sentiment from Democritus includes all the humanity, and incomparably more enlightenment than Christ's famous exclamation.

We must now notice Epicurus, whose mildness, temperance, and virtue, might have taught a useful lesson to such Bible moralists as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and Solomon. That admirable philosopher was born 341 years B. C., and died 270. He held the following enlightened views:—"Philosophy is the exercise of reason in search of happiness. Those things, therefore, that neither assist in the pursuit, nor add to the amount of happiness, are of no value." "Temperance," he remarks, "is that discreet regulation of the desires and passions by which we are enabled to enjoy pleasure without suffering consequent inconvenience." To be impious," says he, "is not to take away from the illiterate the gods which they have, it is to attribute to these gods the opinions of the vulgar." How applicable is this definition to the Bible believers! Epicurus likewise taught, "Since it is every man's interest to be happy, through the whole of life, it is the wisdom of every one to employ philosophy in the search of felicity without delay, and there cannot be a greater folly than to be always beginning to live." "We must philosophise, not for show, but seriously, for it is requisite not that we seem sound, but that we be sound." "Let us endeavor so to live that we may not repent of the time past"—a most sound and valuable aphorism—"The life of a fool is unpleasant." "Justice," he wisely remarks, "respects man

as living in society, and is the common bond, without which no society can subsist. This virtue, like the rest, derives its value from its tendency to promote the happiness of life. Not only is it never injurious to the man who practices it, but nourishes in his mind calm reflections and pleasant hopes; whereas it is impossible that the mind in which injustice dwells should not be full of disquietude. Since it is impossible that iniquitous actions should promote the enjoyment of life, so much as remorse of conscience, legal penalties, and public disgrace must increase its troubles, every one who follows the dictates of sound reason will practice the virtues of justice, equity, and fidelity." Such are the sentiments of the Grecian sage Epicurus. Are they surpassed, or equalled by any of the Bible moralists? The various moral maxims, indeed, which have been elucidated by Christian divines are but an echo of the teachings of men who flourished ages before Christianity was promulgated, and who knew nothing of that book, from which Christians assume all true morality emanated, and without which the world would become a moral wilderness. It is not, therefore, to Christianity we are originally indebted for our moral principles; they existed before Christianity was instituted, or the Bible known. Morality, then, I repeat, is independent of the Scriptures—rests, fortunately, upon a more pure and imperishable basis, than upon writings so immoral.

To prove that a population may be a moral population, and still ignorant of the Bible, I will quote a few words from Addison, author of "Evidences of Christianity," &c., and which confirm the preceding observations. Alluding to the reverence for truth among the ancient Athenians, he observes:—"The virtue of the ancient Athenians is very remarkable in the case of Euripides. This great tragic poet, though famous for the morality of his plays, had introduced a person who, being reminded of an oath he had

aken, replied, I swore with my mouth, but not with my heart. The impiety of this sentiment set the audience in an uproar; made Socrates (though an intimate friend of the poet) go out of the theatre with indignation, and gave so great offence, that he was publicly accused, and brought upon his trial, as one who had suggested an evasion of what they thought the most holy and indissoluble bond of human society. So jealous were these virtuous heathens of the smallest hint that might open a way to perjury."

This circumstance transpired nearly 500 years before the existence of Christianity. What a glorious contrast to the Christian population of the 19th century! The admirers of Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin! In England, the grand emporium of Christianity, the land of Bibles, churches, and parsons, Dr. Price informs us, that there are "a million of perjuries committed annually." How strange the difference between ancient Greece, and modern Europe; one the nursery of heathenism—the other of Christianity!

I will now briefly refer to the morality of the ancient Romans. What says their great moral teacher, Seneca? After denouncing that monster crime, and eminently Christian practice, war, he asks, "How are we to behave towards our fallen creatures? How must we answer it? What rules shall we lay down? Shall we say that we ought to spare the effusion of human blood? How small a matter it is not to hurt him, whom we are bound, by every obligation, to do all the good to in our power! A prodigious merit, indeed, if man is mild and gentle to his fellow man! We are all limbs of one great body. Nature produces us all as relations one to another. She inspired us with mutual love, and made us social. According to her laws, it is a more wretched thing to do an injury than to suffer death." Such are the moral principles of a Pagan—one who was never blessed

with "the light of the Gospel." Let me not be told that no morality is to be found but in the Christian's Bible, while "Seneca's morals" can be read. Listen to the moral philosophy of another Roman, no less a man than the illustrious Cicero. In his Book on Laws there is the following glorious moral truth: "The universal, immutable, and eternal law of all intelligent beings is, to promote the happiness of one another like children of the same father." Again, "The great law imprinted on the hearts of all men, is to love the public good, and the members of the common society as themselves." Is there anything to excel this in the Bible? Yet Cicero had the misfortune to live before "our Saviour."

Let me now speak of a people who knew nothing of our inspired text-book—the Chinese. The ancient inhabitants of that vast empire had a great number of books, principally on morals. The more important of those writings are called Uikn, or the five volumes; and Xu Xu, or the four volumes. The first of the five is called Xu Kin. It was writhy long before the time of Moses, and contains a histore of the kings and sages of the first ages, with thev wise sayings and moral maxims. The second is called Xi Kim, and contains a history of twellu kings, written in rhyme, interspersed with moret maxims.

Confucius says, that the universal moral idea of the book is, "Think nothing that is wicked or impure." The third is called Xe Kim. This is considered the most ancient of all the books, and is ascribed to Fohi himself. It cannot now be deciphered. The fourth is named Chun Creu, or Spring and Summer. It was compiled by Confucius, and treats of the rise of kingdoms by virtue, and their fall by vice—Spring representing the rise, and Summer the fall. The fifth is called the Li Ki, or Memoirs of Rights and Duties, and was compiled by Confucius, chiefly from materials previously existing.

In this production the following moral precept is propounded, precisely the same precept as that said to constitute the basis of Christian morals. The passage exhorts the followers of Fohi to "Do to another what you would they would do unto you, and do not unto another what you would should not be done unto you; thou only needest this law alone, it is the foundation and principle of all the rest."—Moral 24.

This is just saying, almost in the same language, "Do unto others as you would wish others do unto you." Now Confucius lived 500 years before Christ, and if the "Memoirs of Rights and Duties," in which this moral is inculcated, be but a compilation, to a great extent, of moral precepts previously existing among the Chinese, it is highly probable this "golden rule," said first to be promulgated by Christ, had been current among that ancient people thousands of years before our era. This fact proves the utter want of originality in Christian ethics, and that morality can exist without the Bible.

The following passages from the writings of Confucius clearly show that the boasted dogmas of forgiving injuries for which Christ has been so much lauded, was taught by the Chinese moralists long ere the "Son of God" was "born." "Acknowledge thy benefits," says Confucius in his maxims, page 133, "by the return of other benefits, but never revenge injuries."

The following are a few Chinese proverbs, which are as sensible and pure as any of Solomon's:—"As the scream of the eagle is heard when she has passed over, so a man's name remains after his death." "Following virtue is like ascending an eminence, pursuing vice is like rushing down a precipice." "Man perishes in the pursuit of wealth, as a bird meets with destruction in pursuit of its food." "Petty distinctions are injurious to rectitude; quibbling words violate right reason." "Those who respect

themselves will be honorable; but he who thinks lightly of himself, will be held cheap by the world." "Time flies like an arrow; days and months like a weaver's shuttle." "In making a candle we seek for light; light to illumine a dark chamber; reason to enlighten man's heart." "In security do not forget danger; in times of tranquillity do not forget anarchy."

The Ancient Persians. We find morality even among this people—a people whom Christians deem almost beneath contempt. No one, I opine, will affirm that *they* had the "light of the Gospel." Mr. Dunlap, in his unrivalled defence of Abner Kneeland, who was tried for blasphemy in America a few years ago, has made the following admirable remarks upon the morality of that people, as contrasted with that of modern Christians, in proof of the position I am maintaining, *that morality is independent of the Bible*. He observes, "Illustrations from history abundantly show that morality can exist *without* Christianity. Is there not a beautiful instance in ancient history of forgiveness of an enemy, and magnanimity to a fallen foe, which the head of the Church of England in *our* time—the Prince Regent of the British empire, had not the lofty virtue to imitate? I allude to the different treatment of Themistocles, and the modern Themistocles (meaning Napoleon) by the heathen and Christian monarchs. Did not the Persian king display more *real virtue* than the Christian sovereign? Themistocles had repulsed the fleets and armies in Persia, and raised the Athenian republic to that pinnacle of glory which Great Britain reached when the vanquished Napoleon came a suppliant to a victorious foe. The statesman of Athens experienced the ingratitude of the republic, and was compelled to seek at the Persian Court, a retreat from the persecution of his countrymen. He threw himself at the feet of the monarch of that nation whose fleets he had captured,

and whose immense armies he had overthrown, and asked for protection and hospitality. Was it denied him? No, gentlemen; all enmity was forgotten when they beheld the great man of the age in the depth of distress. He was received with kindness and entertained with honor. The revenues of cities were assigned to his support, and the illustrious and unfortunate Athenian was the chief among the friends of the king, and the object of the admiration of his brilliant court. Compare the conduct of the heathen prince with the treatment of the Christian monarch, of a greater man than even Themistocles. The Emperor Napoleon was received under circumstances which ought to have bound the consciences of a Christian people, and the honor of a Christian government. He said to the British people, 'I come, like Themistocles, to throw myself upon the hospitality of the British people.' But he was not received by this Christian government as was Themistocles by the Persians. He was denied the honorable asylum he sought. The laws of nations—the dictates of humanity, and the precepts of the gospel were violated, and he was borne away to a pestilent rock in the midst of the ocean, which, after six years of his cruel exile and agony had elapsed, was rendered famous as the tomb of the greatest character in the Pantheon of History. Does not the virtue of the most powerful nation of antiquity, and the most powerful Christian nation of modern times, demonstrate that morality can exist without Christianity?"

Ancient Hindoos.—In the Braminical books, as quoted, in the "Materials for Thinking," I find the following moral sentiments, which do honor to humanity; they are only a few, however, of what might be adduced. Tell me not that there is no morality without the Bible, while such passages as these can be found in the writings of a people who know nothing of it. "Never to hear patiently of evil, nor to spare that which is mischievous and

wicked—utter no lies—practice no prevarication or hypocrisy—use no deceit or over-reaching in trade or dealing—never oppress the weak and humble, nor offer any violence to your neighbor—keep your hands from pilfering and from theft, and in no way whatever injure a fellow creature.” What a different scene our Bible-loving, tract-distributing country would present if these beautiful precepts were practiced!—precepts given long before Christianity “had a habitation or a name,” and which challenge a comparison with any of our “inspired” morals.

We will now notice a people who were unknown to Christians till so late a period as the 14th century—the American Indians. Even this uncultivated race entertained views of morality of which “civilized” Christians might be proud. The reply of the famous Indian, Red Jacket, to the Christian Missionary, Mr. Cramp, is highly characteristic.—The priest tells the Indians that they were in darkness, and that there could be only one true religion, and it was his. The reply of the Indian affords a memorable instance of the moral dignity and simplicity of that virtuous and unsophisticated race. It is given in Howitt’s “History of Christianity and Colonization,” p. 397—401. Red Jacket eloquently observes:—

“Brother, you say you want an answer to your talk before you leave this place. It is right you should have one, as you are at a great distance from home, and we do not wish to detain you; but we will first look back a little, and tell you what our fathers have told us, and what we have heard from the white people.

“Brother, listen to what we say. There was a time when our forefathers owned this great island. Their seats extended from the rising to the setting sun. The Great Spirit had made it for the use of Indians. He had created the buffalo, the deer, and other animals for food. He made the beaver and

the bear, and their skins served us for clothing. He had scattered them over the country, and taught us how to take them. He had caused the earth to produce corn for bread. All this he had done for his red children because he loved them. If we had any disputes about hunting-grounds, they were generally settled without the shedding of much blood; but an evil day came upon us: your forefathers crossed the great waters, and landed on this island. Their numbers were small; they found friends, and not enemies; they told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men, and came here to enjoy their religion. They asked for a small seat. We took pity on them, granted their request, and they sat down among us. We gave them corn and meat, they gave us poison (spirituous liquors) in return. The white people had now found out our country, tidings were carried back, and more came amongst us; yet we did not fear them, we took them to be friends: they called us brothers, we believed them and gave them a larger seat. At length their numbers had greatly increased, they wanted more land,—they wanted our country! Our eyes were opened, and our minds became uneasy. Wars took place; Indians were hired to fight against Indians, and many of our people were destroyed. They also brought strong liquors among us; it was strong and powerful, and has slain thousands.

“Brother, our seats were once large, and yours were very small. You have now become a great people, and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets. You have got our country, but are not satisfied;—you want to force your religion upon us.

“Brother, continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his mind, and if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right, and we are lost; how do you know this?

We understand that your religion is written in a book; if it was intended for us as well as you, why has not the Great Spirit given it to us, and not only to us, why did he not give to our forefathers the knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it; how shall we know what to believe, being so often deceived by the white people?

“Brother, you say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? why not all agree, as you can all read the book?

“Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers, and has been handed down from father to son. We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us their children. We worship that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united;—we never quarrel about religion.

“Brother, the Great Spirit has made us all; but he has made a great difference between his white and red children. He has given us a different complexion, and different customs. To you he has given the arts; to these he has not opened our eyes. We know these things to be true. Since he has made so great a difference between us in other things, why may we not conclude that he has given us a different religion according to our understanding? The Great Spirit does right: he knows what is best for his children: we are satisfied.

“Brother, we do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you; we only want to enjoy our own.

“Brother, you say you have not come to get our land or our money, but to enlighten our minds. I will now tell you that I have been at your meetings, and saw you collecting money from the meeting. I cannot tell what this money was intended for, but

suppose it was your minister; and, if we should conform to your way of thinking, perhaps you may want some from us.

“Brother, we are told, that you have been preaching to the white people in this place. These people are our neighbors; we are acquainted with them: we will wait a little while, and see what effect your preaching has upon them. If we find it does them good, makes them honest and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again what you have said.

“Brother, you have now heard our answer to your talk; and this is all we have to say at present. As we are going to part, we will come and take you by the hand, and hope the Great Spirit will protect you on your journey, and return you safe to your friends.”

“The Missionary, hastily rising from his seat, refused to shake hands with them, saying, ‘there was no fellowship between the religion of God and the works of the Devil.’ The Indians smiled and retired in a peaceful manner.”

O! what a contrast between the Barbarian and the Christian! How noble the virtue of the one, how disgusting the bigotry of the other! What a glorious triumph of morality over religion! What an unanswerable proof that a people may be virtuous without the Bible, and vicious with it!

Not only, however, can we find morality amongst people who were entirely ignorant of Christianity, but even amongst those who were ignorant of any religion—Atheists.

D. H. Kolf, in a work entitled, “Voyages of the Dutch Brig of War, Donya, through the Southern and little known parts of the Moluccan Archipelago, and along the previously unknown Southern coast of New Guinea, performed during the years of 1825–’26,” informs that the inhabitants of the Arru Islands knew nothing of a God or a future state, and “yet,”

says he, "it is not a little remarkable that the Araruras, notwithstanding that they have no hope of rewards, or fear of punishment after death, live in brotherly peace among themselves and respect the rights of property in the fullest sense." Another extraordinary instance of a people utterly ignorant of all religion, and yet virtuous and hospitable, is mentioned in a work entitled, "Narrative of the loss of the ship Hercules, Captain Benjamin Stout, on the Caffraria Coast, the 18th of June, 1796, and subsequent travel through the southern deserts of Africa, and Colonies of the Cape of Good Hope, addressed to the Honorable John Adams, President of the United States of America." After giving many highly interesting and amusing particulars of the anti-religion of this singular people which I have not time to read, Captain Stout proceeds to express his astonishment and delight on finding "the virtues of hospitality and humanity practiced by men termed savages by their oppressors, but who put civilized society to the blush by their conduct." Yes, our God-worshipping and soul-mongering nations would do well to imitate the simple virtues of a people who can afford to be moral without the pious stimulants of heaven and hell. How nobly and masterly Mr. Dunlap, in the defence previously quoted, combats the stupid assumption, that morality is inseparable from Christianity! He proceeds:—"I have just been told by an eminent clergyman of this city, who is now within the reach of my voice, that some few pious Christians, whose zeal, I suppose, a little out-stripped their knowledge, hold that morality is exceedingly dangerous, as it induces the worker of righteousness to place too great a reliance upon this support, and, therefore, brings his soul into greater peril of eternal perdition. The world has been told by Dr. Horsely, a proud Lord in lawn of the House of Lords of the Imperial Parliament in Great Britain—that Unitarianism, being heresy, even the *moral*

good of the Unitarians is *sin*. According to the doctrine of such Christians, morality and Christianity are things as far removed from each other as earth from heaven. If morality and Christianity, however, be one and the same, or things inseparable, how were societies formed, governments established, and nations raised to power and glory before Jesus Christ was born, and the glad tidings of his gospel proclaimed? Upon what principle was society regulated during the thousands of years which this globe rolled through the fields of space, in its appointed circuit around the glorious luminary, the centre of our system, before the revelation of Christianity was made? Was there no morality in the days of Homer's heroes, amongst whom were some of the most glorious characters ever described in any work of fact or imagination? Was there no morality in those heroic ages, or were the sages and chiefs of the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Æniad*, ideal models of human excellence, the fanciful creations of the immortal bards of Greece and Rome?"

Never was a statement more unfounded, or more gratuitous, than that all morality must come from the Bible, and that we are weeds without it. Morality alone emanates from a book, indeed, which details obscenities so revolting—immoralities so debasing—crimes so monstrous, and butcheries so horrible! What an absurdity! What a libel upon the character of him whose virtue rises above the dark records of priests and impostors! But Bible or no Bible, I would rather live one brief hour, though it were in perdition itself, with the spirit of a Thales, a Socrates, a Plato, and an Epicurus, than through all eternity, with the corrupted remains of a Moses, a Joshua, a Samuel, or a David. With the one I should feel ennobled; the other, degraded. The teaching and practices of the former incite to the attainment of the wise, the good, and the beautiful, but the injunctions and doings of the latter instigate

to all that is degraded, cruel, and vicious. The morality of those sages, who taught long before the Bible was known, or Christianity promulgated, was, indeed, "pure and undefiled;" but the morality of the Scriptures, what little there be, is contaminated by crimes and vices, superstitions, and persecutions at which humanity shudders, and which has hitherto converted Christendom into an arena of bigotry, ignorance, cant, and intolerance. Morality, then, I reiterate,—morality, sound and spotless, existed before the Bible existed, and morality will triumph when that production is exploded, and the sooner its musty pages are closed forever, the sooner will mental liberty, moral excellence, and intellectual greatness pervade the earth!

END.

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
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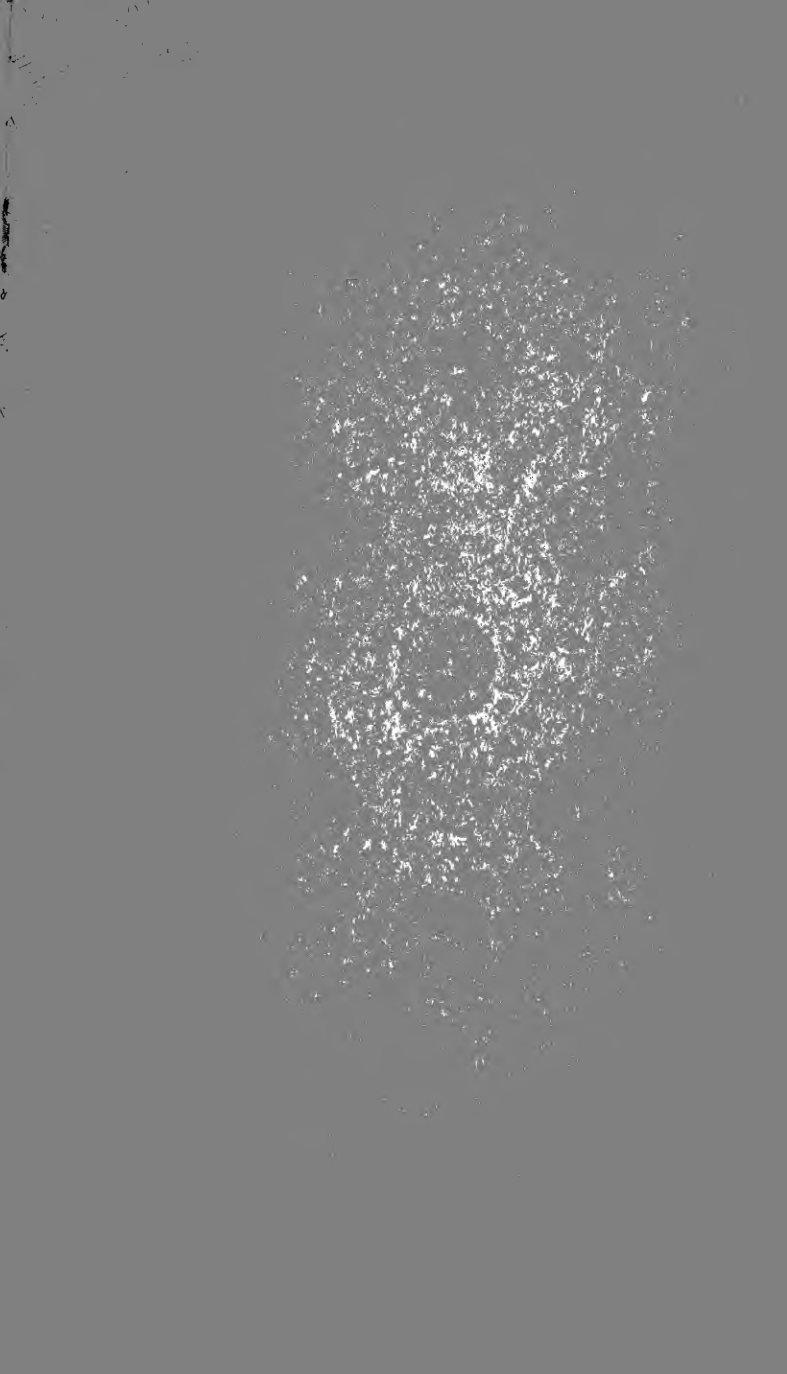


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